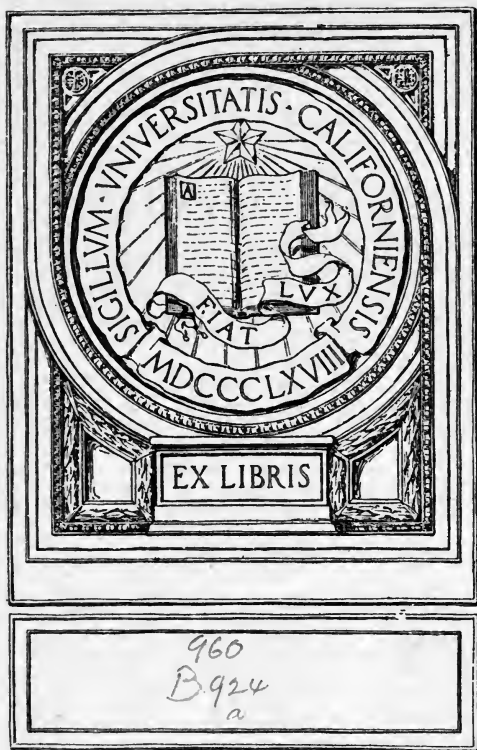




ARTHUR  
OF  
BRITAIN  
—  
R.R.BUCKLEY

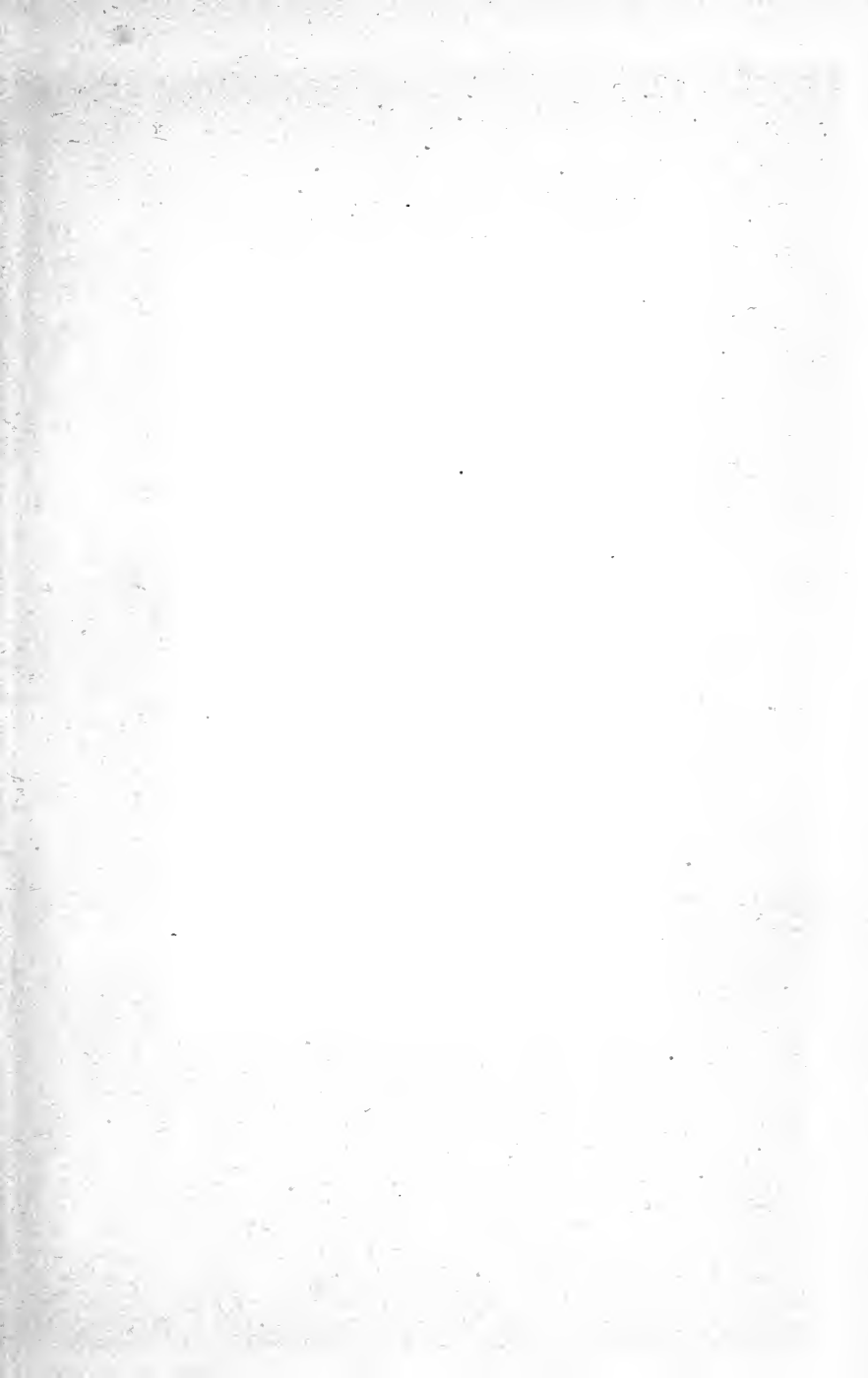


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ARTHUR OF BRITAIN



# ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

BY  
REGINALD R. BUCKLEY



LONDON  
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1914

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MAIN

TO THE PEOPLE OF GLASTONBURY  
AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD  
TO THE ARTISTS FRIENDS AND HELPERS  
EVERYWHERE  
WHO WITH US ARE STRIVING  
TOWARDS A FESTIVAL PLAYHOUSE  
FOR THE MUSIC AND DRAMA OF BRITAIN  
AND OF KINDRED NATIONS  
I DEDICATE  
THIS BURDEN OF MY LIFE AND DREAMS  
AS AN ACT OF FAITH

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## PREFACE

“Arthur of Britain” is based upon national legends, not because of any theory or artistic pose, but for the practical reason that the Arthurian tales and characters are as well-known to adults as are the stories and heroes of the faery tales in the nursery.

The Theatre is the Nursery of Grown-up people.

I have given the dramas a personal and modern application, because I am an individual and live now. Were I a community living a thousand years ago the result would have been otherwise.

When Caxton printed the Malory version he took count in his Preface of the taste and feeling of the day. Tennyson in his Idyls wrote as a Victorian—that is to say a “modern” of the Crystal Palace period.

We have august precedent.

And did not Shakespeare write as an Elizabethan, Milton as a Puritan, and Goethe as a German of

## PREFACE

---

the evolutionary period? All three chose ancient legend, yet wrote for their own age. They left posterity to take care of itself. To the credit of posterity it has done so.

And Thomas Hardy in "The Dynasts" has combined epic and dramatic in a philosophic presentation of Europe's supreme modern man, Napoleon.

Maurice Hewlett in "The Agonists," both in form and manner, has adopted a method not dissimilar from mine.

Gilbert Murray again has made Euripides and Sophocles live in these modern times, both in paper and in the theatre.

The Japanese "Nō Drama," which dates from the time of Chaucer, combines the qualities of Greek, Shakespearian, and Wagnerian music-drama, and has retained its hold until our own times.

So that he would be a bold man who should look upon me as an eccentric adventurer. It remains, however, to add a few notes on methods of performance, and to print the dramas, which appear now for the first time in a complete edition.

The reader will observe that the text is printed in two types, the italic being commentary and narrative, the roman being dramatic. The result

## PREFACE

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should be a continuous unfolding of the story and its inherent meaning. The metrical scheme is varied, and is more a matter of phrasing than of feet. But technique and philosophy must justify themselves. The critic will explain my meaning, or his own, which after all may be the same.

In practice the reader will find it quite simple if he reads it as one reads the Psalms, and not hurriedly as one scans a newspaper.

This is a personal opinion.

There is, too, a genuine demand for readable drama, especially in country places far from a theatre. I should suggest that each member of the Circle should read a scene aloud. Or, by the use of more than one copy, supplemented by writing out minor parts, a really dramatic reading would result, each member representing a character. Special attention should be given to the rhythm. It would be far better to read it as prose than to get upon the stilts of blank verse. And, best of all, remember that Merlin is Britain's Isaiah, and his words should be spoken as becomes prophetic utterance.

Any really capable conductor of a Choral Society could get good results from "The Birth of Arthur." Neither large orchestra nor chorus is

## PREFACE

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essential, though two good principals must be secured. The composer has taken hold of the poem in such a way that chorus and orchestra express the narrative parts in a manner that combines the qualities of oratorio and opera. And the absence of a modern choral expression of the chief British poetic subject should tempt such choral societies as are not pledged exclusively to works of scriptural origin, using that term in the sense that includes Samson and Delilah while omitting Uther and Igraine.

The "Notes" at the end of this volume indicate that a strong movement is on foot for the establishment of what the Press has called a "British Bayreuth." The plans provide for a complete, modern stage, a hidden orchestra, a fan-shaped auditorium, and all the essentials for adequate production along with other works, not necessarily English, or British, or indeed European at all. Under such conditions a summer holiday could be spent, not only in examining the ruins of the past, but in bathing in that Lake of Wonder that is as real to us as to those who sleep. From their sleep let us waken those dreamers to hearten our own deeds, and hail the King who shall come again.

R. R. B.

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# ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

POEM OF FESTIVAL CHORAL DRAMA IN FOUR PARTS



## THE BIRTH OF ARTHUR



## CHARACTERS

UTHER	-	-	-	-	King of Britain
ULFIUS	-	-	-	-	A Knight
MERLIN	-	-	-	-	Prophet of Britain
BRASTIAS	-	-	-	-	A Knight
IGRAINE	-	-	-	-	Wife of Gorlois, Lord of Cornwall

## ACT I

SCENE I	-	-	-	A Wayside in Cornwall	
SCENE II	-	-	-	-	Merlin's Mount

## ACT II

SCENE	-	-	Igraine's Chamber in Tintagel Castle
-------	---	---	--------------------------------------



## PART I

# THE BIRTH OF ARTHUR

## ACT I

### PRELUDE

*Deep in the shadow of forgotten things,  
Rising like mountains round it,  
Is a Lake.*

*White mists o'erwhelm it till its look is mourant.  
Deep are its Shadows and its Silences,  
But white the foam of its black waters,  
When the breathless oars of ghostly rowers break  
its surface calm.*

*Its name is known of dead and dreaming Kings,  
Whose folded purple lies behind the Night.*

*Its name is known to children,  
While they freely walk mysterious glades.  
Its name is known to dim and cloistered souls,  
To those who kneel 'fore Altars,  
And those whose souls ascend the gleaming path-  
way of the Secret Stair.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*To those who toil 'tis known,  
When great ascendant hopes  
Goad on the body to the noble task !*

*'Tis called the Lake of Wonder . . .  
From him who drinks thereof all Doubt is driven.*

*There was a man, who walked in the Land of  
Forgotten Things,  
And he passed to the Land of Oblivion . . .*

*There was a man, who walked amid the Mists,  
And he was swallowed up . . .*

*There was a man, who bathed in the Lake of  
Wonder,  
And his name was Merlin !*

*To him are the Wonders of the Deep,  
The Mysteries of the Earth,  
And the Magic of the Air.*

*Whence came he, O Waters ?  
Whence came he ?*

*Deep are the Shadows and the Silences,  
Deep as Merlin's heart, . . .*

*Deep as the pool where slept the Dragons, which  
he slew !*

*Who bore him ? Who begat him ?*

*Deep are the Shadows and the Silences of things  
remembered,*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*But not revealed . . .*

*O Destiny, is he not thy comrade ?*

*O Light and Darkness, is he not thy servant ?*

*Look ye into the waters of the Lake of Wonder.*

*Is Love there ?*

*Behold ! There lie jewels in the Lake of Wonder.*

*All the Youth of the World may bathe there.*

*And they, who have bathed therein, take thence a  
jewel.*

*Twain and twain they quit the waters, and hasten  
to the Woods of Love.*

*And for those, who lose not the jewel of the Lake  
of Wonder, it is well.*

*But for those who lose the jewel it is ill . . .*

*Merlin bathed in the Lake of Wonder . . . alone  
he bathed there . . .*

*And in the Waters came he upon a great jewel,  
Which was the Stone of Enchantment.*

*When he came to the Wood, no woman brought  
her jewel,*

*But many, who had lost their jewels came to him,  
but he said them nay.*

*For the Children of Enchantment live only for  
Enchantment,*

*And, if they rebel, the jewel is ta'en away.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*O Lake of Wonder, roll your Mists away !  
Strike through the Mist, O Sun,  
And give us Day !*

*Day by the wayside, day and foliage green . . .  
A Cornish lane, where Autumn's hand is seen.  
Near Terrabyll, 'neath Gorlois, Cornwall's lord,  
Who, 'gainst the King, hath raised a rebel sword.*

*As light steals through the branches,  
The tints of the Autumn glow  
Red like the elder passions  
Of Loves of long ago !*

*Along the lane comes Uther,  
Clad in the gear of War:  
Sir Ulfus, the cautious, beside him walks . . .*

*Together they tread the pathway,  
Flanked by the shrubs and ferns,  
Their weapons agleam in the sunray,  
As the lordlier warrior turns . . .*

*For he is Uther, the King,  
Of stature great and stately,  
With eyes of flame, and mighty brows for bastions!*

*In silence he walks, unheeding his man,  
Who first the silence breaks :*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Ulfius.*

O Lord and mighty warrior, all deeds are done  
at thy desire.

Thyself hast laid a siege round Terrabyll, and  
spurring here,

I left Tintagel like to an otter with the dogs  
upon her.

Within Terrabyll Castle thou hast the Duke  
in ward,

And his white spouse within Tintagel Keep!

*Uther.*

Surely the Duke shall fall into my hands,

But think you, Ulfius,

Tintagel shall her keys surrender?

*Ulfius.*

I know not!

*Uther.*

And if I gain the keys of that proud castle,

Think you surely

That Igraine shall yield at last?

*Ulfius.*

Thou art a goodlier man than Gorlois.

*Uther.*

Ulfius, my men can batter down the gateways,

The men-at-arms may fly before the spear  
thrusts . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The keep shall fall !  
Of fire and flame shall be a triumph !  
But shall the flames within my heart, O Ulfus,  
Melt the white marble of Igraine ?

*All goes dark and gloomy.*

*Uther.*

If the white marble turn to blackest ashes . . .  
If I have fought for damage, with no delight  
to crown it !  
If, from ruin, we reap but destruction.

*The light steals through the branches.  
The weapons and war-gear gleam,  
But the eyes of Uther are dull as the gloom of  
gathering thunder  
Sunk in the mood of a dream.*

*Ulfus.*

The sunlight comes . . . . among the clouds  
it shineth !  
It comes to melt thy shadows.

*Uther.*

Nay, unto me it comes to mock my grief.  
Thou know'st my sorrow from the first, . . .  
How at the banquet it began . . .  
How she a sudden flame of glory shone before  
me,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And wild within my breast the torrent rose !  
The full, red wine in beakers lay before us,  
As with Tintagel's lord we feasted, as a friend,  
After the heavy wars we waged upon him.  
In peace, with merry hearts we supped together.  
In that wild hour, the flaming wine and torches  
fired me . . .

And when we rose to leave the revel,  
As King, I bade him yield Igraine to me.  
Then was he wroth, and shame and anger  
reddened

Igraine's white face.

Gorlois was mine elder, yet had he full drunk,  
And he did threaten me, the King of Britain !  
So from that fateful hour my will was written,  
As I am King do I desire Igraine !

*The eyes of Uther are gleaming with gathering  
storm.*

No longer mine the fleeting hopes and dreams  
of passion !

O Ulfius, these eyes have seen all beauty.

These arms in amorous dream have held the  
fairest living !

My soul, with purple wings, has beaten upward  
Till in the heavens has it fared . . .

Whence is this flame that round me flares ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Whither or whence I care not, so that she be won!"

I am a goodlier man than Gorlois . . .

But Tintagel's lord is set before the King in her embraces!

And so my anger now is red as the love-rage of my heart!

His death shall feed my hungry hate.

Igraine's fair body shall before the love-rage fall!

How long shall stand Tintagel?

*Ulfus.*

My lord, I know not, for it is exceeding strong.

These many years it hath withstood

The shock of storm and sword.

Nor God, nor guile hath yet prevailed against it.

*Uther.*

O Ulfus, there's a sickness come upon me

Naught will cure save victory.

Can'st thou not help me?

*Ulfus.*

Maybe I can; if thou be patient.

Thou knowest Merlin?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Uther.*

Him who was strangely born, half angel and  
half man ?

*Ulfus.*

Or, so they say, begotten by a devil.  
Perchance the Mage may help thee,  
Perchance thy passion spurn.  
For Merlin's will is moved by fancies,  
Dark and wayward to other men.

*Uther.*

Thy word is good !  
Seek out the Mage, and bring him unto me  
At Terrabyll.  
Thither I go now to lead my men in war.

*Ulfus.*

And I must seek the Mage alone ?

*Uther.*

Art thou afeard ?  
Speed on thy task,  
For patience hath no home within my heart !

*Boldly King Uther goes,  
Out of sight along the way . . .  
As Ulfus watches after,  
Behind him stalks a wayworn beggar,  
Wearily limping, craftily cringing,  
Waiting for alms.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Old Man.*

Give alms, Sir Ulfus.

*Ulfus.*

Old man, I've nothing for thee.  
Leave me in peace!

*Old Man.*

If I leave thee, Sir Ulfus,  
Thy sorrow will not leave thee.

*Ulfus.*

Get hence, old man! Naught troubles me.

*Old Man.*

What of the King!  
And Gorlois's wife?

*Ulfus.*

Art thou a spy?

*In power and strength the beggar man is risen,  
And Ulfus shrinks from him, and stands away.*

*Old Man.*

On yonder Mount when Night's more fully  
fallen,  
Bid the King come and hold communion with  
me!  
For oft it haps that ill and sorry passions  
Are but the pods for glorious seed and harvest.



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Ulfus.*

Who art thou . . . ?

*Old Man.*

Bid the King come, for even now I go toward  
yon mountain.

Let the King follow if he love Igraine.

*Slowly the old man wends away . . .*

*And Ulfus's gaze upon him rests awhile . . .*

*Ulfus.*

'Twas Merlin's self, who, if tales be true,  
Once met two sprites upon the mountain yonder.

One was a messenger of heaven,  
The other, envoy of satanic hosts for mercy  
suing.

There he heard mystic converse,  
And may overhear the councils of the highest  
and the deep.

He knows the ways of men, of beasts and trees,  
The starry firmament, the sounding deeps,  
And knows the language of the rushing winds.  
So will I haste, and bid the King to follow.

*Along the lane goes Ulfus,  
And all grows bleak and grim.  
Crashes the heavy thunder,  
The droop of the clouds so dim.*

*All goes black and dull as the gloom of the thunder  
gathers,  
As it booms in the distance, but ever closer comes.  
Naught see we in the storm :  
The wayside there no longer.  
Keen are the blades of the Swords  
That cleave the clamouring sky !  
Loud is the boom of the thunder,  
That ever cometh more near.  
But the chaos and the gloom reveal  
A darkling form on a mountain.*

*Voice of the Storm.*

All grows bleak and dim.  
All goes black and dull  
As the gloom with its Terror !  
In the brooding spirit of the Storm  
Works the soul of the World and the Will.  
For here are revealed the wonders of the deep,  
And the magic of the air.  
Out of the storm and stress,  
Out of the wizard working of worlds,  
Toiling 'mid the gloom,  
'Mid the shattering boom of the thunder !  
Striving to bring to birth  
The Son of Fire and Flame,  
As from the flame of the lightning  
The passion of thunder is risen,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

So the godhead of storm  
Wakens the world!

*Merlin.*

O Daranau, thou reimest in thy lightning and  
thy thunder

Like to a man with mighty passion molten!  
Hold back thy blasting breath, while here I  
commune.

The King comes now for converse and com-  
munion,

His heart aflame for Gorlois's wife, Igraine.

O Daranau, thou god of thunder!

O fire and flame that now light up the gloom,  
Give me your guidance!

*Sharp are the fiery swords that cleave the clamour-  
ing sky.*

*Rising in fierce revolt, the untamed world of  
darkness!*

*From out the cauldron of Chaos,  
The fire and gloom are come.*

*Voice of the Storm.*

Yearning to break through the wall of their  
world,

Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.

*Merlin.*

O god of heavenly conflict, thou hast spoken.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

E'en as the greatest flash of lightning gives the  
loudest thunder,

And, as the loudest thunder moves the mountain,

So shall the greatest love give us the Hero!

O flame of Love, which courses through King  
Uther,

Surround Igraine that Britain may be saved!

*Voice of the Storm.*

Even as the greatest flash of lightning gives the  
loudest thunder,

And, as the loudest thunder moves the mountain,

So shall the greatest Love give us the Hero!

*Two forms are rising from the murk and darkness.*

*Together climb they to the mound,*

*Whereon the Seer,*

*A King amid the storm, upstandeth.*

*The one a man of stature great and stately,*

*And one who fears the lightning, with the crashing  
thunder . . .*

*Merlin.*

All hail, O King, and welcome to Sir Ulfus,

Who sought to hide this sorrow.

*Uther.*

'Tis not a sorrow, but a mighty love, O Merlin,

Which hath brought me to thee!

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Merlin.*

There are two Gates to Sorrow's Garden, Uther.  
The one is Birth, the other Death is hight.  
All that from storm and travail springs  
In restless stream shall flow,  
And, in the ebb, shall pass with sobs and sighs.

*Uther.*

What gloom, O Merlin ? Thou, who knowest  
the wonders of the world !

*Merlin.*

Ye rede me wrong, for know ye not  
How Britain in sorrow lingers yet ?  
Half stand we in bestial Night,  
Half reach we to the Dawn !  
Knowest thou how every sage looks for a  
glorious kingdom,  
More kingly than the realm of kings ?  
What is conceived by Man, by mankind can be  
wrought !  
What seek we from the King of Britain ?

*Uther.*

Am I a penitent that thus thou pratest ? . . .  
I come to thee because I love a woman,  
That thou, by magic art, mayst do what baffles  
armies.

*Merlin.*

Wouldest thou that I should aid thee ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Uther.*

I command it, by my sword!

*The hand of Merlin rises, with prophetic power,  
Upward toward the heavens.*

*Keen is the blade of the sword that cleaves the  
clamouring sky.*

*The sword of Uther 'neath the stroke is shattered !  
Loud is the boom of the thunder, shaking the  
mountain.*

*Then Merlin turns unto the haughty King and  
paling Ulfus,  
Taking the hilt of Uther's sword, unbroken.*

*Merlin.*

Uther, I will aid thee,  
If thou wilt swear one oath :  
That, when Igraine is thine,  
To me thou wilt deliver her first-born son !

*Uther.*

By my sword I swear !  
To thee I will deliver her first-born son.

*Merlin.*

Trust not thy sword o'ermuch.  
But now ye must hasten ! For the storm re-  
turneth,  
And e'en to-night thine arms around her close !  
Who will go with thee ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The arm of Uther toward pale Ulfius sweeps.*

*Merlin.*

Get you to horse!

We parley further in Tintagel Castle.

*Uther and Ulfius behind the mount go down,*

*And, by a pathway steep, in haste are gone.*

*Hear the mad music of the storming thunder*

*From Chaos's cauldron, when the powers here-  
under*

*Rebel 'gainst heaven till the fires are quenched,*

*All the armed clouds to rend asunder*

*Before the Light is victor, and the Dark outdriven.*

*Merlin.*

The light upon the helm of Uther glances.

Go, unruly Torch, for Britain dost thou burn!

And, in thy stead shall come a Light to Britain!

Igraine, fresh from her convent, Gorlois married.

No fatherhood nor destiny is his . . .

She, the most beauteous in the land mated to

Gorlois,

And yet our Britain waits

The coming of a King!

Uther of the Sword Stroke!

Within his heart unruly love upburneth . . .

O proud, adulterous heart, thou shalt as incense  
burn before an Altar!

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Daranau, loud voic'd and full of curses,  
Thou shalt hear the Voice of Silence . . .  
O Gwydion, from thy couch of skins,  
A wonder shalt thou see!  
I follow thee, O Uther . . .  
E'en now, the spell is woven . . .

### *Voice of the Storm.*

Yearning to break through the wall of our  
world,  
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.  
*Down the steep path the warriors wend,  
'Mid the mad music of the booming thunder . . .  
Like some wild prophet of the powers hereunder  
Stands Merlin . . . calm upon the mountain.*



## ACT II

### PRELUDE

*Dark and stark and strong  
Tintagel Castle stands !*

*The splash and the surge of the sea on the rocks of  
Tintagel,  
The boom of the breakers,  
The echoes in chasm and cave . . .*

*O hear ye the song of the surges,  
That beat in the caves of Tintagel,  
The shrill of the pebbles,  
The hiss of the backgathering waves.*

*The gloom of the dusk has been darkened,  
And distant the thunder  
That rang in the Castle of Gorlois,  
And boomed in the caves.*

*The splash and the surge of the sea on the rocks of  
Tintagel . . .  
The boom of the breakers,  
The echoes in castle and cave . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The crests of the galloping waves,  
The curvetting ocean,  
The gloom of the dusk, and the hurrying cloud  
waves above . . .*

*And on the headland,  
Tintagel Castle stands !*

*Alone in his cavern, beneath the great headland,  
Merlin is brooding . . .*

*Dark is the soul of Merlin,  
Dark with the doubt of Destiny,  
While the Widsom of the Ages  
Slumbers in the womb.*

*The splash and the surge of the sea,  
The dark will of Merlin,  
Threaten the Castle of Gorlois !*

*The watchfires burn and glower,  
Where Uther's army lies.  
Like to the sea in its strength  
Is the passion of Uther !*

*The surge of the sea, and the love-rage of Uther  
Threaten the Castle of Gorlois !*

*Dark and stark and strong,  
Besieged by land and sea,  
By sea and sky,  
By man and wind and wave beset,  
The Castle strongly stands !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Within her chamber, gazing seaward,  
In witchery of gleaming moonlight,  
Igraine of Cornwall with Sir Brastias waits.*

*Igraine.*

How calm the moon,  
The white wave-crests how fair!  
Can men wage war on such a night as this?

*Brastias.*

The wolfish fangs, my lady,  
Seek but for flesh to tear.

*Igraine.*

He would not tear  
Her whom he strives to win?

*The wind just lifts her hair,  
And on her ivory skin  
The moonbeams shine.*

*Brastias.*

Men are like wolves when they are ruled by  
passion.

*Igraine.*

How fierce his eyes,  
And strange his look of longing!  
When Gorlois wooed me,  
Naught I knew of this.

*Brastias.*

What learnt you, lady,  
From false Uther's eyes ?

*Igraine.*

O Brastias, how can I say ?  
Suppose I were a waxen candle,  
Cold upon an altar standing . . .  
And a red flame started down upon me,  
And the wax melted, burning up my soul ?  
*Whence is the flame that round her soul is flaring ?  
Never was wax so white,  
That flame should not o'ercome it.*

*Brastias.*

Feel you thus to Uther ?  
O lady Igraine, I grieve for thee.

*Igraine.*

I know not whether it be Love  
That doth fever all my soul.  
But, O my friend, I am a lonely woman . . .  
Gorlois can find his life in war and manhood !  
But I . . . within my soul . . .  
My mother-love hath brought no babe to prove  
me.  
Enough . . . I weary thee.  
Thy love is ever in the land of dreams and song.  
Thou dost not know the yearning of the barren,  
lonely soul !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The eyes of Brastias turn  
That all their tale be hid.  
For some men love too well,  
And hide within their heart  
Those things that may not be.*

*Brastias.*

I age, I age, my lady.  
It matters little now . . .  
But there were days when, with the holy sisters,  
There dwelt a maiden called, like thee, Igraine.  
She was so beautiful that, in a song, I called her  
"The White Igraine, the faery Queen of Corn-  
wall."

In those far days my harp was always with me,  
But now it hangs above my narrow bed.  
And a great lord who heard my song, came to  
me :

"Of whose fair beauty sing you, harper?"  
I told him . . . Days and weeks went by . . .  
Then knew I that my harp had lost her to  
me . . .

My song had won for him a bride!

Then went I, and took service with him.  
A knight was I. His trusty knight I've been,  
And over her I've guarded till this day.

*His head bowed down, Sir Brastias turns away.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Igraine.*

Hadst thou no hate for Gorlois ?

*Brastias.*

Nay, lady, for Love is not unworthy.  
The chosen bridegroom of Igraine was Gorlois,  
And I thine elder was . . . and poor.

*Igraine.*

But Gorlois was mine elder also—

*Brastias.*

But Gorlois was the lord of Cornwall.

*Igraine.*

Strange that one schooled by holy sisters  
Should be beloved so many ways.  
Some men are fierce,  
And some are tender for me.  
Say, O Brastias, if thou canst,  
Who in the end will hold me ?

*Brastias.*

I am not Merlin,  
And Love is deep to fathom.  
Sometimes to me it seemeth  
That some strange Power,  
Moving behind the deeds of men,  
Mingles desires, choosing men and women,  
Weaves and broiders like a cunning craftsman.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Igraine.*

Can Uther gain the Castle ?

*Brastias.*

The keep is strong, my lady.

Though men and storms rise up,

They fail to batter down the gateways.

*Igraine.*

And what of Gorlois ?

*Brastias.*

'Tis said that Merlin weaveth spells against  
him.

*Igraine.*

Ha! Ha! Why will ye ever mistrust Merlin ?

*Brastias.*

Why wilt thou ever trust him,

Whose magic is unholy ?

*Igraine.*

What ye call magic is but greater knowledge.

*Brastias.*

From morn till eve last sennight

In the cave he sat.

What did he there ?

No good man liveth thus.

*Igraine.*

The cave beneath the Castle ?

*Brastias.*

Yea.

*Will of the World.*

Even now, beneath he broodeth,  
While the Wisdom and Love of the Ages  
Slumbers in the womb.

*Igraine.*

And what of that unruly King,  
Who with such lawless strength doth love me ?

*Brastias.*

Full sick is he, and carried in a litter,  
Like some Arabian robber chief to battle.

*Igraine.*

And is he sick for Love ?

*Brastias.*

Nay, nor for Love ! For lust and longing,  
Half of the body, half of moody brooding !  
Like to the king, who looked upon the stars,  
And claimed them as the cattle of his pasture !  
Uther loves not  
As true men love.

*Igraine.*

Knows any man true Love ?

*Brastias.*

Yea, even he who knows the rapture of which  
Taliesin sings,



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

A Love which like a star doth shine,  
And, like a star, reveals a world beyond our  
sense.

*Igraine.*

'Tis well thou art not wed, O Brastias.  
Thou art a dreamer.  
Dreams without deeds  
Will ne'er reveal that other world of thine.

*Brastias.*

Deeds without dreams reveal a world all grey.

*Will of the World.*

Up from the Lake of Wonder  
Rise the deeds that were dreams but yesterday,  
The dreams that are the deeds of to-morrow.  
The knowledge that is magic . . .  
The magic of the air . . .  
The knowledge and the passion,  
Whence all Creation comes.  
O Wonder of Creation !

*Loud clangs the postern bell,  
A-clang, a-clang, impatient, clamorous . . .*

*Igraine.*

Go, Brastias ! Who cometh . . . send him  
here !

*Will of the World.*

Hither, O Merlin, Wisdom's soul and  
Wonder's,

Unto Igraine, who waiteth for her hour  
In moonlight's gleam and witchery of gloom.

*Dark in the doorway stands the mighty Merlin,  
Proud in the utter calm of Manhood.*

*Merlin.*

Igraine, my child,  
Thine hour is here.

*Igraine.*

Mine hour ?

*Merlin.*

Thine hour,  
And His who Shall Be !

*Igraine.*

His who Shall Be ?

*Will of the World.*

She waiteth for her hour  
In gleam of hope,  
And witchery of Wonder.

*Merlin.*

Yearning to break through the wall of their  
world,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.  
In the soul of the world, striving for birth,  
Are the Men of To-morrow !  
Like to the cry of the homeless . . .  
Like to the wail of the children, who clamour  
for bread.

Yearn the unborn for bodies,  
Where worketh the spirit of Will and of  
Wonder.

Through the thoughts in the mind of mankind  
Works the Will of the Power of Darkness.

That Power hath been upon me,  
And hitherward I come,  
Even to thee !

Thou art the woman who shall bear  
A wondrous child.

*The silence is alive with pulsing thought,  
The brooding Soul of Woman,  
And the Mind of Man . . .  
The Soul of Wonder,  
And the World's great Will.*

*Merlin.*

Thou dost feel it !  
Speak . . .  
Thou dost hear his call ?  
Hearken . . .

*Will of the World.*

Like to the cry of the homeless . . .

Like to the wail of the children, who clamour  
for bread,

Yearn the unborn for their bodies to clothe  
them.

*Igraine.*

For many years I've brooded o'er my long-  
ing . . .

*Merlin.*

The bird that lightly lives

Broods but a season.

The Hero Child must needs be carried in the  
heart for ages,

E'er he flower in the womb.

*Igraine.*

Who shall his father be ?

*Merlin.*

Speak to thine heart !

*Igraine.*

Seven winters long I dwelt the wife of Gorlois,  
Lonely and strange.

But, as the years rolled on,

And Gorlois's moody temper grew more sullen.

My soul did sicken,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Starved for lack of living love !  
Though I conceived not,  
Yet did my heart outbear my body,  
And, in my secret soul, a mother-love was  
kindled,

A mother-love for an unknown, unborn and  
unfathered babe.

And year by year . . . within this lonely land  
I live my life . . . alone,  
Brooding o'er my longing  
As a sea-bird o'er her nest.

But still he came not . . .

Then did I come to thee for charm to bring me  
fruitage.

No charm thou gavest me . . . but the charm  
of Knowledge . . .

To know the stars, the mighty deeps . . .

All things thou taughtest me !

But one thing thou taughtest not,

E'en to stay the empty craving of my soul !

*No more the moonbeams on Igraine are shed.*

*How very silent is the room become.*

*Fainter the splash on the rocks of the headland,*

*Softer the echoes beneath, in the cave.*

*Igraine.*

But when proud Uther claimed me at the  
banquet,

Then did a strange new joy arise within me,  
And all my body burned with glad desire!  
No shame I felt,  
Though thus he read my face of fire.  
His eyes of flame from brows of iron shone out,  
Great and shapely were his limbs . . .  
More kingly was he than the lord of Cornwall.  
And all my mother-soul was quickened 'neath  
his gaze.

*Will of the World.*

In the bodily rapture and longing for love  
The souls of the unborn are thronging.  
The Love of the Woman,  
The Love of the Hero,  
And the Will of the World are as one!  
In the bodily rapture and longing of mother-  
love.  
The Hero-Child is waking to Life!  
Yearning to break through the walls of their  
world,  
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.  
In the Womb of the World, striving for birth,  
Is the Man of To-morrow!

*Igraine.*

Merlin, thou hast no hate for Gorlois?

*Merlin.*

Hate have I for no man, but the fool!

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Igraine.*

A rumour is abroad that thou hast woven spells  
against him.

*Merlin.*

All knowledge is but empty magic to the fool.

Heed not this babble!

To thee, who knowest, Truth is but greater  
Mystery!

*Igraine.*

'Tis well, O Merlin,

I have ever trusted thee.

*Merlin.*

No hate have I for Gorlois,

No love have I for Uther.

'Tis only for the Future that I strive!

Thy son shall be both king and saviour to his  
people!

O fair Igraine, give all thy longing freedom,

And, by thy Love,

Chasten the King!

Burn from his soul the fleeting hopes and  
dreams of Passion,

So, by thy Love and Wisdom,

Our Britain shall be saved!

*Will of the World.*

Our Britain that in sorrow lingers yet . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Merlin.*

I go to the cave beyond thy chamber,  
Nor come I thence  
Till in the heavens 'tis written  
That Arthur shall be born !

### *Will of the World.*

O lovely mother-longing !  
Deep within thy tender soul  
The hero-child is trembling into life !  
Cradled deep in mother-longing  
Sleeps the unborn Hero . . .

### *Igraine.*

Arthur . . . ! Arthur ? . . .

*Then turneth Merlin . . .*

*The splash and the surge of the sea  
Sound out as he goeth in silence.*

### *Will of the World.*

Hither, O Uther, Passion's soul and Power's,  
Unto Igraine, who waiteth for her hour  
In mystery of midnight,  
And mastery of Love !

*The clash of mail and armed clangour sounds,  
Nearer . . . with heavy tread . . .*

*Igraine is filled with great foreboding  
Like to thoughts in the mind of Mankind*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Are the dooms of the power of darkness.  
No power is hers, for the Will of the World,  
Has gathered her soul in its bondage.  
From out the moonlight to the shadow moving,  
Behind the purple curtain,  
To her secret chamber,  
Igraine is gone.  
Deep in the shadow . . . slowly two warriors  
come.  
The first a torch-bearer, in knightly armour,  
Holding his flame that all in shadow lies . . .  
Behind, a man in all the pride of power . . .  
Very fearful in the lesser man,  
The flame is all a-tremble . . . near the door he  
shivers. . . .*

*Uther.*

Go, Ulfus!  
With my lady would I speak!  
Hast an ague, man?  
Thou art all a-shake!

*Ulfus.*

No, sire . . . but . . .

*Uther.*

Go, . . . and warm thee!

*Will of the World.*

Yearning to break through the walls of their  
world

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.

*Ulfus sets down the torch, high flaming,  
Near to the purple curtain of the chamber,  
Wherein Igraine awaits the fateful word.*

*Alone and trembling stands the King,*

*The torchlight flaming,*

*As though its flame of Love*

*Would burn all bonds away.*

*Deep are the shadows of forgotten things,*

*Deep amid dead and dreaming kings*

*Is Gorlois gone.*

*The curtain parts again,*

*And in the flaming light,*

*'Mid shadows cast,*

*Igraine . . .*

*Igraine.*

*Thou dost tremble,*

*Like to thy man . . .*

*Hast thou an ague?*

*Her smile like moonlight to his flame of Love . . .*

*Uther.*

*Igraine!*

*His word, like some far cry of passion, comes . . .*

*Igraine.*

*Speak on! O speak . . . !*

*What would'st thou?*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Uther.*

Thee . . . !

*Igraine.*

Speak yet again, O King.

*Uther.*

First at the banquet did I love thee.

Thou, and the wine and torches burned in  
golden blaze!

*Igraine.*

Nay, Uther, 'twas thyself thou loved'st!

For me . . . thou wert full of longing,

But lacking was thy love.

*Uther.*

How know'st thou ?

*Igraine.*

I know, and yet I care not.

As thou art King did thou desire Igraine!

As I am woman, long I for my son . . . !

And, in that longing,

All my soul is molten passion,

And my body fevered pain.

For my child shall have a hero for his father,

A mighty arm, a kingly will,

Of Wisdom and of Woman unafraid!

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Now thou art come meseems I'm newly wed  
For thou art like a giant  
By the battle strengthened.

*Before Love's curtain they stand,  
Beneath Love's light,  
Passion, the King of the Land !  
The Queen of the Night  
Shines in Igraine,  
Her beauty as white  
As the candles that flame on an altar bedight,  
For the bridal of King and of Queen.*

*Igraine.*

Hungerest thou ?

*Uther.*

Aye, for thy lips and for thy breast, I hunger !

*Igraine.*

Thirsteth thou, O King ?

*Uther.*

For thine arms and for thy kisses,

*Within his arms  
King Uther holds his loved one,  
The white Igraine,  
The faery Queen of Cornwall !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Uther.*

And thou, Igraine ?

*Igraine.*

I thirst as doth the dry and parchèd ground,  
When rumours of rain come with the rush of  
winds.

*Deep are the shadows and the silences,  
Deep as Merlin's heart, whence sprang the dream.*

*Igraine.*

I could linger with thine arms about me  
Till all the stars should die.  
Till all the heavenly host should melt away,  
Like candles on an altar . . . !

*Uther.*

And I, Igraine, thy form would clasp,  
Till mine eyes failed with looking on thy white-  
ness !  
I would swoon within these arms till time should  
cease . . . !

*Time is no more with its throb,  
In the light of the day,  
The Ages are yearning to life,  
And the sob of the sea,  
Like the surge of their pulses is beating,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*In the life that shall be.*

*His arms around her close . . .*

*High flames the torch . . .*

*Will of the World.*

Go, unruly torch, for Britain shalt thou burn,  
And, in thy stead, shall come a light to Britain!

*Her head is droop'd . . . upon his shoulder  
    leaning,*

*The white Igraine, the faery Queen of Cornwall !*

*Uther parts the purple curtain,*

*And with her*

*Within the secret chamber of Igraine is come.*

*The curtain falls . . .*

*Igraine.*

I would linger with thine arms around me . . .

*Uther.*

Till all the stars should die,

Till all the heavenly host should melt away,

With looking on thy whiteness.

*Will of the World.*

O starlit night, brood on !

O kindling flame of life, thine hour is here !

For Britain lies in darkness.

Love's fire and flame shall kindle

To-morrow's race of men !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The soul of the Hero alone shall save you,  
He only smite the golden Dragon down!  
He only into the Light shall lead you,  
To show you Life,  
And bring you to the Dawn!

*Uther.*

And if in lands unseen, I waken,  
And thou art from me gone,  
Again mine eyes shall close . . . !

*Deep are the shadows and the silences,  
Deep as Merlin's heart,  
Whence sprang the Dream !  
Casting aside his cloak,  
The Mage with Ulfius cometh.*

*Merlin.*

Ho, Ulfius, dost thou hear ?

*Ulfius.*

Like as the dry and parchèd ground . . .  
She . . . thirsts for Uther . . .  
The earth is full of evil.  
What of Gorlois ?

*Merlin.*

Dead !

*Ulfius.*

Will not . . . some ill befall us ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Merlin.*

Tush ! Thou art afeard to walk,  
Lest into some imagined pit thou shouldest fall.

*Ulfius.*

Walk we not in sin ?

*Merlin.*

Sin is the fear of the soul, walking in darkness.  
Sin is the death of the soul, that knoweth not  
love.

*Like as the dry and parchèd ground.  
The world a Hero waits.*

*Merlin.*

And from this ground shall spring  
The noblest sapling by Britain grown !  
From Earth he springs,  
But he shall tower to Heaven !  
For earthly passions  
Are but as pods for heavenly seed and harvest !  
A spell I've woven, with the warp and woof of  
Fate,  
That she may match the frenzy of the King,  
Whose hero-blood goes swirling through his  
veins !  
And till the wailing harps proclaim  
That Uther unto Vortigern is gone,



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Shall white Igraine be filled with Love.

*Ulfus.*

And is the potion of thy mixing, Merlin ?

*Merlin.*

Nay, it is the wine within their veins,  
Mingled by the Power behind the veil of  
darkness!

Look through yon window!

Lo, the vault of heaven,

Where, in the hand of God,

All Fate is written.

*Will of the World.*

O starlit night, brood on !

O kindling flame of Life, thine hour is here !

*The splash of the sea on the rocks of the headland*

*Fainter is grown, and the storm is gone by !*

*But the waves are grown fresh, with the joy of their  
surge,*

*The air is grown keen with the salt of their spray !*

*Merlin.*

See'st thou yon living point of fire,

Which o'er the sea is risen ?

*Ulfus.*

I see, O Merlin,

If but at the spell of thy deep art.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*With arm on high,  
With eyes in glory flaming,  
The voice of Merlin grows,  
Like to the battle-cry of kings,  
As the prophetic Voice that sings aloud  
The Will of God in Man !*

*Merlin.*

White and radiant glows the Star of Arthur,  
there . . . !

*Ulfius.*

Arthur . . . dost thou say ?

*Sound loud the trumpet note of flame,  
Exultant in the glory of his name,  
His, who shall be !*

*Merlin.*

Arthur of Britain, king and lord !  
Thou, with a glorious rule, shall sway the  
people,  
And to thy knights shall Mystery be revealed !  
But, as in Man there dwell two seeds,  
The one of Death,  
The other Life,  
So shall he die . . .  
His glorious kingdom shall have end !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The Hand of God is come upon him !  
In trancèd ecstasy he sways,  
His soul between the Seen and Unseen trembles,  
In spherai power his voice is raised !*

*Merlin.*

Then shall the Seven Curses come upon the  
kingdom !

A curse upon the land,  
That the fields be sown with fire,  
And the harvest yield its store of dust and iron.

A curse upon the arm that its toil be turned to  
loathing.

A curse shall come upon the eyes that they see  
no beauty.

A curse upon the lips that they sing no praise !

A curse upon the body that its glory become  
unclean,

That the lust of the sun  
Be as shame in the darkness !

A curse upon those who are wedded and love  
not,

And a curse upon a people,  
Come tired from the womb !

When these curses are come upon the people,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Let them cry aloud  
For the second coming of the King!

Arthur, king unborn,  
Thus shalt thou rule :  
Thy law shall be  
To pluck the Flowers of Freedom !  
Join the passion of Uther,  
With the calm thought of Igraine !  
Free thy people  
From the Dragon of fear  
And the black brand of shame !  
And then, perchance, once again the Grail may  
    come among us ;  
Once again a Light shall come from Heaven ;  
And, in the pure flame of Eternal Love,  
Burn all our shame and sin away !

So far can Merlin go.  
My spell is woven.  
The bar of my power is here,  
And all my deeds  
Lie drifting on the deep !  
The Mage's sun is set,  
But when the wailing harps proclaim  
That Uther unto Vortigern is gone,  
That he, with fathers dead, doth lie,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The flower of all our sowing riseth !  
So, to the Power behind the Veil of Darkness,  
Where all my might and magic naught avail me,  
To Thee I trust great Uther,  
Fair Igraine,  
And yon white Star . . . !

### *Will of the World.*

O starlit Night, brood on !  
O kindling flame of Life,  
Thy Dawn is here.  
Love and the Night of Stars,  
And the surge of the sea,  
Sing the song of the spheres !

The world on the bosom of Night  
Leans full of yearning and dreams ;  
The red flowers of sleep,  
And the fire of stars,  
And the breathing of Love,  
Are as one.

Languid as love that is spent,  
We lie in the darkness ;  
But now cometh longing  
And new love to save us !  
Fire of the waters that gleam in the moonlight !  
Fire of the starshine, at promise of Dawn !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Like the sea in its raging strength  
Is passion at midnight ;

The billows are leaping,  
Anger high,  
Spitting scorn at the moon's pale flame.  
Now cometh longing and red fire to save us.

Leap high, O billows !  
Flash joy, O spray !  
Rise on your passion,  
And all the world,  
In fiery glow  
Shall burn its shame away !

At Dawn of the Hero  
The world is newly wed !  
And her lover lies upon her breast.

Come, O sky, and wrap around us,  
Let thy stars grow pale and die ;  
Come, O sun, and flood our bodies  
With thine awful purity.

No longer now  
Shall passion hide in shame,  
For our souls are glowing  
With the promise of the day.

O Lake of Wonder,  
Roll your mists away ;

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And in the shadow of thy waters clear,  
Reveal the mystery of Life and Love !

\* \* \* \* \*

### *A Far Vision.*

Behold there lie jewels in the Lake of Wonder !  
All the youth of the world may bathe there ;  
And they who have bathed therein  
Take thence a jewel ;  
Twain and twain quit they the waters,  
And hasten to the woods of love.





## THE ROUND TABLE



## CHARACTERS

ARTHUR	-	A Squire (Acts II and III King)
KAY	- -	A Squire
THE BISHOP	-	
ECTOR	- -	A Knight, Arthur's Foster Father
DAGONET	-	A Knight, and King's Jester
MERLIN	- -	
GUENEVER	-	Daughter of King Leodogan
BEDIVERE	-	A Knight
TALIESIN	-	A Bard
LAUNCELOT	-	A Knight
LADY OF THE LAKE	-	
NIMUE	- -	

Chieftains, Folk, Priests, Ladies, Squires,  
and Men-at-Arms.

ACT I

SCENE - - Outside the Church

ACT II

SCENE - - The Hall of Arthur at Camelot

ACT III

SCENE I - - Island of the Lady of the Lake

SCENE II - - The Forest

SCENE III - - Merlin's Tomb in the Forest

PART II  
THE ROUND TABLE  
ACT I  
PRELUDE

*Cold as the souls that lie sleeping,  
The dead, awaiting deliverance . . .  
White as the hair of drear Winter, the World . . .  
Cold as the steel of the sword,  
Awaiting the flame of the hero . . .  
Even as the seed in slumber lieth  
Beneath the frost and snow,  
So the hearts of all men beat and burn  
    For glowing deeds,  
The fruit of faithful dream . . .  
The Stone of Power is hoar with frost,  
    And idle lies the Sword,  
    The gleaming blade of hero stroke,  
    By brooding Merlin set.  
Its buried point within the Stone  
Cleaves till the hero come.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The sleeping wisdom of the World  
Waits for the soul of fire.  
The harvest of the Dreams of Man  
Await the living Sun ! !*

*(The snows of Christmastide have come . . .  
Cover the ground, and cling about the Church,  
Shapen by Faith, and strong.  
Rough hewn the Stone by loving hands,  
Wide open stands the door.  
Lusty the voice of manhood sounds,  
And women swell the song.  
Before the Church, beside the door,  
Stands a great Stone foursquare,  
And, in the midst thereof  
With point firm set,  
A mighty Sword !  
None are without, but one may hear the song  
within.)*

*Chorus within.*

*Hail we the blessed day of Birth,  
Whereon 'neath Syrian skies was born  
The Son of Fire and Flame !*

*Within a stable, scorned of men,  
Son of a Mother, spurned, reviled,  
Raised from the manger of an inn,  
The Eastern sages praised the Child !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Hail we the blessed day of Birth,  
Whereon 'neath Syrian skies was born  
The Son of Love and Fire.

*While these words rise,  
Strong from the burning souls that sing,  
A young man comes across the yard . . .  
He cometh even as they sing :—*

*“ The son of Love and Fire.”*

*Close at his heels a comrade runs,  
Less proud, less strong than he.  
The song breaks off . . .  
The murmuring of spoken prayer . . .  
Falls now and then upon the waiting ear.*

*Arthur.*

Kay, as thou hast said,  
A goodly Sword within that Stone is set !  
No man hath had it forth, meseems,  
But we will draw.

*Kay leaps upon the Stone, hard striving,  
But naught avail his struggles.  
He may not move it.*

*Chorus within.*

Through endless ages sound the praise  
Of Motherhood and Child Divine !  
Aye unto them shall Manhood raise  
The Altar and the Mystic Sign.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Hail we the blessed day of Birth,  
Whereon 'neath Syrian skies was born  
The Son of Love and Fire !

*Arthur.*

Come down, O Kay !  
Upon the Stone are written words of  
Wisdom . . .

*Kay.*

Yea, Merlin laid it there,  
Before the sun was risen . . .  
Maybe some spell upon it lies,  
And well it were to heed . . .

*Kay cometh down with care, and near young  
Arthur stays.*

*Arthur.*

This Stone is Power,  
And the Sword is Might . . .  
Who draweth strength from Power,  
Is king by Right.  
Goodly words are these, by Merlin graven.  
Kay, Merlin's words are strong as great men's  
deeds,  
To fire our daring !  
I will assay ! !

*He leaps upon the Stone, with the keen air aglow.*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Chorus within.*

The hero-life of daily toil,  
A Life of Labour did he lead !  
He healed the sick, 'mid sinners dwelt,  
And stilled the hungry cries of Need !

Hail we the blessed day of Birth,  
Whereon 'neath Syrian skies was born  
The Son of Fire and Flame !!!

*And even as they sing these words,  
Young Arthur draws the Sword,  
Whirling the blade on high.*

*Kay.*

Give me the Sword, O Arthur,  
And thou my blade shalt have !

*Down Arthur leaps, and gives the Sword to Kay.*

*Arthur.*

Here is the Sword, my friend,  
And I will haste for thine.  
Both strangers to our swords,  
Right fair shall be the play !

*In joy is Arthur gone,  
And Kay is left in fear,  
For, as they raise their song,  
The singers draw more near.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Chorus within.*

He taught that Love shall rule the World  
With all the strength of Sword and Shield !  
All hail the day when joyful earth  
A harvest meet for all shall yield !

All hail the blessed day of Birth,  
Whereon 'neath Syrian skies was born  
The Son of Love and Fire !

*Nearer they come,  
And now are seen . . .  
From out the doorway do they tread.  
First come the priests . . .  
A brazen Cross  
Before the Bishop led.*

### *Chorus coming forth.*

The Priesthood nailed Him to a Cross.  
*So chaunt the priests in doleful tone.*  
The soldiers' sword, the people's voice  
*The men-at-arms and people sing.*  
Slew but the Body of a Man.  
The Soul arose ! Rejoice ! Rejoice ! !  
*And all take up the great refrain,  
And gather round the Stone.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

All hail the blessed day of Birth,  
Whereon 'neath Syrian skies was born  
The Son of Love and Fire ! ! !

*The Bishop standeth in the midst . . .  
Young Kay upon the outskirts waits.  
The Bishop sees the Stone with wonder . . .*

*Bishop.*

Strange that this Day of Days  
Hath brought the Hero-King !

*Breathless with wonder, faithless with surprise, . . .  
All the crowd agape, . . .*

*Dagonet.*

Ho ! Ho ! The Sword is gone !

"This Stone is Power,  
And the Sword is Might."

A thief has seized his hour,  
And ta'en his flight !

*Sir Ector sees young Kay, and bids him near.*

*Ector.*

My son, hast thou, of thine own arm  
Gotten the Sword ?

*Kay.*

It seemeth so . . .

*Leader of the Crowd.*

Well drawn was the Sword !  
Hail to young Kay !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Crowd.*

Hail to the hero !

Never we dreamed that thou shouldest reign !

*Ector.*

Thou art my son . . .

I feared another's arm.

My son hath ta'en the Sword !

Lift it on high, O Kay !

*Kay raises the Sword, but his not the power  
of Arthur.*

*Bishop.*

Ye all know how, in Merlin's sooth,

" Britain in sorrow lingers yet.

Half look we to the Dawn."

And Merlin said a hero-king should come,

Forth from the dark to lead this Folk !

That he alone should draw the Sword,

On which our blessing lay !

*Crowd.*

For a leader we yearn,

Yea, as our fathers had Kings

To rule o'er the land !

In darkness we walk,

Led this way and that . . .

We stumble and stray,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Nay, nor ever shall stand,  
Save 'neath the flame in the eyes of a hero !  
The chieftains have striven all day,  
Since the coming of Dawn,  
When Merlin, the wizard, with spells set the  
blade.  
But none drew it forth  
Till the hand of young Kay  
Taught by great Merlin,  
Strove while we sang !

*Crowd.*

Yea, he shall lead !  
Around thee we gather,  
Around thee we tread !  
From the dreams of old Merlin the Deed,  
Springing to life while we prayed !

*Shoulder high they raise the lad,  
And loud the cry " All hail ! ! "*

*Dagonet.*

He hath not ta'en the Sword !

*Leader and the Folk.*

Not ta'en the Sword !

A lie ! !

Thou wert with us within !

Maybe thou did'st not try ?

Sir Dagonet as King !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Ector.*

Thou, Dagonet, untrue !

*All the Crowd.*

Ha ! Ha ! All hail young Kay.

*Dagonet.*

I'll prove my word

Upon the Sword !

*He sets it in the Stone, and sings the while.*

" This stone is Power,

And the Sword is Might !"

Now, Britain's fairest flower,

The sun shines bright.

Thy folk around thee stand,

This Christmas day.

Now, Hero of our Land,

Do thou assay !

*Young Kay is carried to the Stone,*

*And madly strives and strains,*

*But naught avail his struggles. . . .*

*Bishop.*

Well, well, he drew it once !

Not always to the strong and proven

Goes the glory.

If good Sir Ector's son hath drawn the blade,

'Tis ours to bless nor tempt the lad again.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Fiercely strives young Kay,  
And all in wonder wait,  
Thronging around.*

*Dagonet.*

The Stone hath Power,  
But the lad is slight !  
Methinks he needs an hour  
To prove his might !

*Leader of Folk.*

Shame, Dagonet,  
Scorner of Wisdom,  
Scorner of the Church !

*Bishop.*

Fool, thou art bold !

*Dagonet.*

Would that all fools were bold !

*Beholding Arthur, coming in his strength.*

Arthur, come thou here !

*Quick as the sunlight cometh young Arthur.*

*Silent the crowd and scornful withal.*

*He leaps on the Stone.*

*Boldly he stands, fronting the crowd,*

*The stream of his hair aglow in the sun,*

*Ablaze with love and fire !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Before the Folk, in all men's eyes,  
He draws the Sword.*

*Leader of Folk.*

Never did any tell forth the tale of young  
Arthur !

His mother we know not, nor the name of his  
father.

*Crowd.*

Kay is our King, and the leader we love.  
For the pride of the chieftains we loathe,  
Yet no bastard shall lead us.

Hearken ! O Hearken !

Hither the mighty and proud !

*Bishop.*

Stand by the Church, O Folk,  
As we by you have stood.  
From the pride of this lordling race  
Cometh no good.

*Chieftains.*

Once again in the eyes of the people  
Shall all men strive for the Sword.  
He, who riveth it forth,  
He, O Folk, is your Lord !  
One by one shall we strive  
As Merlin hath said.



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

From the breed of the lion the hero,  
For the Son of the Dragon is dead !

*Onward the chieftains come,  
Like the waves of the tide.  
Backward the people are washed  
By the song of their pride.*

*Crowd.*

Nay, for a scullion hath taken  
The token ye see for your King.

*Bishop.*

Ours but to bless and to crown  
The hero who's gotten the sword.  
Will ye have Kay, who first won it,  
Or shall the young Arthur be lord ?

*Dagonet.*

Ho, for the folly of a crowd !  
Ye found young Kay,  
My wise and merry masters,  
Holding the sword, like to . . . Ha ! Ha !  
Like to a housewife toasting bread . . .  
This is the Hero-King, ye said.

*Arthur.*

Stay, Sir Dagonet ! My brother's soul is  
wounded

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

By all this scorn !  
But this I say before the face of all,  
If I be King, then Kay shall be the Butler !

*Dagonet.*

A merry jest !  
Hail to the kitchen king !  
The spit hath power,  
And the fire is bright.  
The realm of flesh and flour  
Shall learn his might !  
  
Ho, scullions, bring the venison !  
Ho, butler, bring the ale !  
We'll drink and sing  
To our Lord, the King,  
Till the fire burneth low !

*Crowd.*

We'll drink and sing to our lord, the King,  
Till the fire burneth low !  
The body full of meat,  
And all the flagons drained !  
We'll drink and sing  
To love, the King,  
When the fire burneth low !

*Bishop.*

Stay this fool's jesting !  
If thou knowest,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Say what know'st thou of young Arthur,  
Whence thy scorn of Kay ?

*Crowd.*

Will ye have Kay for your King,  
O lords in your purple and pride ?  
For Merlin hath spoken by magic,  
The Bishop hath pledged us his faith.  
Ours but the will to abide.

*Chieftains.*

For a leader we yearn,  
Yea, as our fathers had kings !  
False is your faith,  
And Merlin and Magic are dead !  
Yet are we the masters of Fate,  
The builders and breakers of things ! !

*Dagonet.*

O Churchmen, folk, and chieftains, hear !  
I've seen them gather fuel,  
And Arthur build the fire.  
Young Kay would wander here and there,  
Till Arthur struck the flint.  
Then, while the squire would warm himself,  
Aglow with labour Arthur stood,  
The son of Fire and Flame !  
When Arthur seized the magic Sword,  
I saw Pendragon's brow !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Chieftains.*

Arthur, is this thing true ?  
Art thou Igraine's own son,  
Thy sire our King of Kings ?

*Arthur.*

I know not my Mother's name . . .  
But once did Merlin tell  
How all my tale to him was known.  
And when the hour was fully come,  
He, in the ears of all would sound it forth !  
Till then he bade me serve Sir Ector well,  
Nor dream of whence I sprang !

*Chieftains.*

Woe ! Woe ! Merlin is dead !  
To the Lake Isle did he wend.  
To the Isle where the spells are woven,  
By a wondrous witch, 'mid long lost souls,  
Lured by her beauty to the Lake of Wonder.

*Deep are its shadows and its silences.*

*Bishop.*

Pray for his soul !  
By wile of woman haply hath he fallen,  
For often-time he scorned my word.

*Who is the witch of wonder,  
Who in the Lake Isle bides ?*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

She dwells in a violet Isle of Rest,  
Where all save Merlin fear to tread !

*Crowd.*

Full many a day his boat was seen,  
Crossing the Lake at eventide . . .

*Arthur.*

Not dead ! Not dead . . . my master.  
When I awoke at Dawn,  
Like sunrise rose his song.  
"Forth I go, forth where love is young !"  
So sang my Master, nor can Merlin die  
Till Britain see her dawn !  
Not as a man is Merlin known to me,  
But full of wisdom, knowing all aforetime,  
Strangely working through the ways of men.  
He cannot die, until by men 'tis known  
What he hath seen between the dusk and dawn.  
He cometh ! Is here !!  
And not alone he comes !  
My brother, Kay, see her whom we have served,  
In Leodogan's land !

*Chieftains.*

His words will we hear, O Folk !  
Ye and your Bishop in fear,  
Waiting for wisdom and power,  
Shall bow 'neath the strength of his word !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The maiden and Merlin come, while the folk  
are gathered around.*

*Stoutly the chieftains stand, right in their  
pathway set.*

*Arthur in faith fronts Merlin.*

*Folk.*

Welcome, O Mage,

From the realms of the dead art thou risen !  
And greeting to thee, Guenever,  
From the highlands afar !

*Bishop.*

What of the rumour of thy Death, O Merlin ?

*Merlin.*

The foot of time treads slow,  
The spreading wings of Death brood o'er the  
earth.

His talons grip the well-fed kine,  
And the great beak is buried where he will !  
I know my hour . . . not far away.  
But this, O Bishop is the Day of Birth,  
For ye have praised the Child !

*Dagonet.*

Merlin, while all men praised and prayed within,  
Young Arthur gat the Sword !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Chieftains.*

But know, O Merlin, and learn  
That we take no scullion for lord,  
E'en though he claim the blood of Igraine.  
And Uther Pendragon for sire !

### *Folk.*

Let Guenever choose us a King,  
Him would we serve while we live !  
Let her choose from the twain,  
Or give us the man of her love !

### *Merlin.*

Upon the feet of Destiny ye blunder . . .  
The hour is here,  
The hour which the coursing stars have written,  
For which the beating waves of ocean yearn !

### *Arthur.*

Tell forth the tale, my Master !  
Lift me up as leader of this people,  
Or strike me down, as be thy will !  
To labour was I born,  
I seek no rest as King or scullion !

### *Merlin.*

Arthur, thy tale I tell,  
Gorlois, whose soul for long in slumber lay,  
Fell on the field of war !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Brooding night and day, Igraine,  
Wrapt in strange and fateful dream,  
Saw the men who strove to slay . . .

Heard the voices call.

Even as armies that struggle to slay,  
So strove the Hero that clamoured for birth,  
While Fate beyond Night's curtain stood,  
His Torch aglow !

Beneath her chamber, caverned deep,  
For sleep my body lay !

My soul led Uther to her gate,  
And from the love of King and Queen,  
Woman's dreams and deed of Manhood,  
Sprang the Son of Flame !

### *Folk.*

By the Toil from which he sprang !  
By the labour of his hands,  
Arthur Pendragon, hail !

### *Chieftains.*

By the line from which he sprang,  
By the Beauty of Igraine,  
Almost we hail thee lord. . . .  
Yet art thou young, unwed, untrained in war,  
Unbearded, and unloved by queenly woman's  
soul !



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Merlin.*

The time is here, O Arthur,  
The fruit of Wisdom ripe !  
For I will unfold a mighty purpose,  
Which before thy sire was set,  
But the door of Death behind him closed  
Before the Deed was done.

*Arthur.*

Then tell it forth, for what is youth, O Master,  
But to throw us madly in the arms of Time !  
Long have I loved a queenly woman !  
If I be King, no scullion shall ye see !  
Thine are the Dreams, O Merlin,  
Ours the Deeds shall be !!

*Merlin.*

Then shall ye hear the whole !  
For your strong bodies are for goodly use !  
Too long in hurtful freedom have ye wandered !  
Ye know full well that I no priestcraft carry  
Within this breast, where bardic fires blaze !  
But know that in the East the Sun doth rise,  
As ye have sung !  
In days ago sprang forth a power to save !  
He, Whose Birth ye sang,  
Called His comrades round.  
Bread they break, and Wine they drank,

Before He was betrayed . . .  
Then heartened by the Bread of Life,  
And fired by the Wine,  
Through all the world in fellowship  
The Flame of Love was borne !

*Chieftains.*

For a leader we yearn,  
As in the days ago . . .  
No flaming Hero burns in Britain  
Like to the men of old !

*Guenever.*

There is a Table in my father's land.  
As in the days of old.  
So in Cameliard.

*Arthur.*

Yea. I have been to Leodogan's land,  
Where fellowship hath sway.  
His daughter drank the Wine I bore . . .

*Guenever.*

Yea, the Wine I drank . . .  
As thou didst fill my father's flagons,  
He marked thy brow,  
And saw in thee the son of Uther.  
Dost thou not call to mind  
How, at Cameliard, I brought thee water,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Thee alone of all the squires.  
When from the field thou camest wounded,  
To wash the dust of tourney from thee ?

*Arthur.*

Aye, and the dust of all unworthy days.  
Tell me of this Table Round,  
How it may come to Camelot,  
And fellow-serving bring ?

*Guenever.*

My father saith that it should bind the king-  
dom,  
Nor in the highlands stay,  
That in days to come,  
It fall not into doom.  
For, lo, this world is given for our joyaunce,  
For loves of man and maid, for children's  
laughter,  
And old men's learning . . .

*Arthur.*

Yea, we must banish sorrow from our land,  
Righting wrong, priests of the body,  
Healing all the wounds of this red world !

*Folk.*

Bring us to this, O King ! This thy fellow-  
serving !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The Table Round as dower shall come,  
With Guenever, our Queen !

*Merlin.*

Yourselves the words have spoken,  
As we had dreamed !  
We knew the hidden tale of love,  
But now the way is plain !  
Since thou the Sword of Power hast taken  
Naught shall thy will withstand !

*Merlin.*

*(The splash and the surge of the sea on the  
rocks of Tintagel  
Sound in the heart of the Mage as he stands !  
The stars had come forth . . . The moonbeams  
were white on the sea.)*

Once at Tintagel, on the headland,  
When moonlight turned the sea to silver,  
When I, a young and burning bard,  
Sat silent, through the summer night a-brood-  
ing,  
I seemed to see the vision of a world  
Where fair was life, and free and full ! !  
Where all were brave, and most did labour . . .  
Where none were poor, where strife was still,  
Because the aim of all your struggles was for-  
ever won !  
Long have I been chief bard of Britain,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And hold I that all the longing of our songs  
Is that our land in riper years  
Shall be the Garden of all earthly glory,  
Where love shall grow her harvest . . .  
The only shadow . . . Death . . .

### *Folk and Chieftains.*

E'en then, beneath the sickle of the Autumn  
Reaper,  
Shall rise again the pulsing life !  
All our sorrows and our struggles  
But the fuel of their songs shall be !

### *Arthur.*

And this shall be, when all men's strong desire  
Makes Deed the fruit of Dream !!

### *Chieftains.*

As birds of Rhianon thy voice,  
O Guenever, our Queen.  
Praise we the day when Arthur fared  
To Leodogan's Land.

### *Merlin.*

When the Crown shall be shaken,  
The King no more seen,  
Our lives gone as shadows,  
We, but as sleepers that waken to life,  
The oak of our Britain shall live,  
In freedom that knows not death.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Arthur.*

Then speak with one voice,  
O Chieftains and Folk !  
Ye, who have spoken all things,  
Of my toil, of my right !  
This Sword, in the hand of your chosen,  
Is given to you !  
Choose me, or cast me forth  
To toil as my daily wont.  
Or, in our Merlin's words I'll strive  
To Dream and then To Do !

*Chiefs and Folk.*

To Dream and then To Do !  
Hail to the Table Round, O King,  
Arthur Pendragon, hail !

*Bishop.*

When the will of the people  
Beats in the heart of the King,  
Mine but to bless and to Crown !  
O People, pay homage !  
Come hither, bow down  
To him who has toiled here unknown  
As the son of your Kings !

*(With joyous surge of song,  
The Chieftains bow them down,  
In choral tide the people flow,  
Before the King and Queen.)*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Chieftains and Folk.*

Praise unto thee, O King !

Within the Church the Crown !

Before the Sword of Power the Strong shall  
bow them down.

With Thee to lead us forth,

With Guenever to greet

All glorious the field of war,

And glad the faring home !

Our Britain shall be saved in thee,

To whom the folk bow down.

And we, thy chieftains, kneel

For thou shalt wear that crown

All glorious once on Uther's head !

Aye, Vortigern, and Lear,

The fathers of thy fellowship,

Our brotherhood to be !

And brave shall be the foe henceforth,

Who 'gainst our land shall dare,

A fatherland, in brotherhood,

In Merlin's sooth shall flower !

*(Then turn the Crowd and shoulder high,*

*Arthur Pendragon raise !*

*Merlin, the Bishop, Guenever,*

*Are moved amid the throng,*

*And toward the Church, the Sword on high,*

*Rises the surge of song.)*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

In joyful labour Merlin's dream  
Shall rise at harvest time !  
Arthur Pendragon, hail !  
Sprung from a hero-race of old,  
For ever shall thy tale be told,  
And Guenever shall gleam,  
A flame beside the flame of Fire,  
A sheath beside thy Sword !  
To Dream and then To Do !  
Hail ! we the Table Round !  
Through all the world our Deeds shall  
glow,  
And loud our song shall sound !  
Hail we the Day of Britain's Dawn,  
Praise we Pendragon's son !  
The Bard shall dream, the Harp shall sound,  
The Heart shall flame and glow,  
With Bread and Wine the Table Round  
Shall feed us day by day !  
The Sword of Power uphold the right,  
The fear of foemen slay !  
The sun ashine shall melt the snow,  
When Winter's day be done !



## ACT II

### PRELUDE

*The Table Round !  
Round as the World is round,  
As the spheres are round  
As they float in the ocean of air  
Like ships on the sea.*

*The Table Round !  
Hewn of the oaken tree,  
When the strong arms smote,  
Where the great axe swung.  
In the forest Freedom was won,  
Hewn with the pangs of birth.  
Shaping with song and laughter,  
Moulding to use of Manhood,  
The craftsmen gave their blood and bone,  
Warp of thew and web of sinew,  
That Freedom should be born.*

*Oh goodly flesh of timber,  
Born of a manly love.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Solitary tree in sorrow grown,  
In the forest lone and still,  
By toil of Man for Men  
Thou art become the Table Round,  
Old Wisdom's ripened tree !*

*Therefore let the trumpet sound !  
Let the rafters ring !*

*Around the Table shall the Order range.  
The Order ranged,  
In order true and right,  
Ranged round the rightful King,  
Each Knight,  
Like a jewel of truth and worth  
Set in a golden ring  
Of feasting and of praise !*

*The Table Round !  
In the Hall of Arthur the King  
Let the trumpet sound !  
Let the Free Folk sing again in Arthur's land  
Where the years fallow have lain,  
Till the King should Come Again  
To Camelot !*

*Dagonet, the Fool, and the Squires are waiting  
for the Knights and the King.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dagonet.*

Ho ! Ho ! The new Round Table !  
Why is it round I wonder ?  
Because when round a Table  
The rounder I grow, say I.

*Round the Table in a ring they go.*

*Squires.*

With a dum-day-do,  
Around we go !  
Because when round a table  
The rounder we grow, say I !

*Dagonet.*

When Kings are wed in Camelot,  
What do we do, I wonder ?  
We pray our new Pendragon  
His wisdom teeth will grow !

*Squires.*

With a dum-day-do,  
Around we go !  
Because when round a table  
The rounder we grow, say I !

*As they dance and prance,  
Into the Hall  
Walks Sir Bedivere.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dagonet.*

Good day, Sir Bedivere !

Would I might sing the greeting song to-day !

A Bard like me

Is grown too fat for aught save ponderous  
music.

Too heavy for dance am I.

*Bedivere.*

Let the Fool keep to his folly,

And so be wise.

Are not the Bards of the West

Able to praise better than thou ?

*Merlin, Taliesin, and a group of Knights are  
come.*

*Dagonet.*

Say, Merlin, and thou, Taliesin, hearken,

Am I not a Bard even as thou . . . and thou ?

*Merlin.*

Bards in this world, Sir Dagonet, are rare,

Rarer than Fools, though thou of fools art  
rare.

And I grow old.

Yet I dare sing as the Northern skald

Till all the cold in your blood is thawed,

And the good swords gleam in the sun :

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And the eyes of love blaze with the beacon  
light . . .

Thou, Taliesin, shalt sing as nobly to-night  
As when the Western men hailed thee a Bard  
to be.

*Around the Table the red cloaked Knights are  
stood.*

*The King and Guenever enter the Hall,  
And to their places come.*

*On Arthur's right, and on the Queen's left hand  
An empty place is left.*

*All.*

Son of the Dragon, hail !  
Long shall thy banner wave  
From Camelot to London town,  
From Severn to the sea.

Lord of the Briton's brood,  
Son of the dragon, hail !  
With plow and sword and shield,  
Homage to thee we yield !

From Camelot to Stonehenge,  
Where the hidden secrets lie.  
From hilly Tor to hidden Grove  
From Winchester to Wye.  
Where Northmen frown

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And Southmen smile  
Wherever you may be.  
From Orkney's Isle to Sussex Down,  
From Severn to the sea.

### *Arthur.*

Welcome, to sit with me at the Table Round !  
Welcome, Guenever,  
Let Taliesin sing,  
While we sit at the board.

### *Taliesin.*

In the Court of Arthur the King, of what shall  
be my song ?  
To the wonders of Britain shall I tune my harp,  
O chieftains ?  
Of the Horn of Bran Galed shall my song be ?  
Nay ! for we are full of drink and merry,  
And all the wine of Bran Galed would be as  
water !  
Of the Garment of Padarn Beisrudd shall I sing ?  
Nay ! for ye all wear it,  
Sith not a man in Arthur's Court is churlish !  
Of the Chariot of Morgan Mwynvawr no more  
will I sing,  
Since no man could be elsewhere  
Than in the Court of Arthur,  
E'en were his feet shod with wings !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

But of him would I sing who sits enthroned  
At the Table Round in Camelot !

O birds of Rhianon,  
Birds of the blue, unclouded air,  
Pathway from Paradise to the green clad earth,  
Sing your songs of the springtide.  
Bid the birds of the sable wing  
Croak with the frogs of the marshes,  
And pour, Birds of Rhianon, a song unending,  
For the Wings of Love are spread,  
Till even the dead  
Rise again as immortal flames of song,  
Rise like the birds of fire and air  
Till the sky blazes and burns.  
Guenever, the bride of Britain's Hero,  
Like the dawn is come to Camelot.  
Like the noontide shall thy love be,  
For she is as the Birds of Rhianon,  
Who charm away the memory of sorrow.

*With courtly bow Taliesin's song is ended.  
Strong lunged applause is his,  
And the vivid thanks of laughing eyes.*

*Arthur.*

Our thanks are thine, Taliesin !  
And to you all, my friends, our love is given.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And as Britons love a lightsome music,  
Now shall Sir Dagonet give forth what's in him !

*Dagonet.*

Nay, O King ! The song would choke me.  
As thou art strong, have mercy !

*Arthur.*

Sing thou the lesser songs, and then  
Merlin shall sound us forth a larger music !

*Dagonet.*

Yea, a lesser song I'll sing.  
It may be the very thing. Who knows ?  
Here goes !  
About a certain ancient King  
Who lived so long ago.  
So long ago  
My beard doth grow  
While I begin to think.  
So long ago my mouth is dry,  
Sir Kay, to thee I drink ! . . .  
H'm !  
Thus sang a Bard of old :—

The large songs send men to death !  
The small songs wake them up.  
The large songs take a deal of breath.  
Sir Kay, another cup ! . . .  
My thanks. Sir Kay, to thee !



The little songs in tankards dwell,  
The large in battles die !  
The bigger bards with prowess swell !  
While I—am only I.

The little songs make friends to sing,  
The large songs puff them out.  
I'd rather scorn an idle King  
Than praise a lazy lout.

The great King rules and all men praise,  
But I say "Wait and see."  
He may be all that Merlin saith,  
Say I, I hope he be !

The large song saith, "The King doth well"  
The small song saith, "Beware !"  
And all the little courtier men  
Just wonder how I dare !  
Say I, Just wonder how I dare !

*Arthur.*

Well done, no mannikins for me  
About the Table Round.  
But a bridal board, Sir Dagonet,  
Should throb with a cheerful sound !  
Of ladies sing ! For many and fair are here !

*Dagonet.*

Yea, sire—yea.  
Were I a lady proud I'd be

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And thinner I'd be I wis',  
Else at the Court of the King I'd get  
A dozen pouts to a kiss.

For men by beauty are led about  
As the devil a saint may lead.  
If woman be ugly never a lout  
Will give her a word or heed.

So hey for the good well-favoured folk,  
And ho for the lank and lean !  
A cup for the wise !  
Good health to your eyes,  
And the best of good luck to the Queen !

Yet they're much the same as you, O King,  
And quite as big Fools as I !  
And that's about all I've got to sing,  
So somebody else may try.

*Guenever.*

And now, Dagonet, a dance,  
As at Cameliard  
Around the Table, Arthur, long ago.

*Arthur.*

As at Cameliard, now in Camelot  
A pretty dance we'll tread.  
Up, Dagonet, fill the wine cup ! Ho !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dagonet fills a golden cup with wine.  
He leaps upon the table, and all are ranged around.*

*As sailors sing a chanty,  
So Dagonet doth lead them.*

When Vortigern went hunting  
The dogs had holiday,  
So they ran around around about  
Uphill and downhill.  
When Vortigern went hunting  
They hunted merrily.

The King was at Cameliard,  
A scullion was he,  
And he ran around around about  
Hewing and drawing.  
The King is come to Camelot  
To set a people free.

When Britons go a dancing,  
If they are led by me  
They do sing a sort o' chanty-song,  
Sprawling and drawling.  
For stiff and courtly songs won't do  
To sing and dance with me.

*Dagonet.*

The dance is over.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dagonet hands the wine cup to the Queen.  
Guenever and Arthur drink wine.*

*A great shout goes up :—*

*“Merlin ! Merlin !”*

*Full slow is he to rise as he did dwell upon  
The mysteries of earth and air :*

*But 'neath the breath of happy shouting,  
Straight and lively stands he as of yore !*

*Merlin.*

O royal pair, O Bards and friends,  
When we had urged the need of this Round  
Table,

The King, Uther Pendragon, had bidden men  
to build it.

But when I came to Leodogan's Court  
In far Cameliard,

Leodogan, father of our Queen,  
Said he would shape and send it,

A pledge of peace, and goodly gift, with  
Guenever.

This oaken board, come from a royal home  
Is made for fellowship and fellow-serving !

Therefore, Sir Kay, let the great Wine be  
brought !

*Sir Kay leads his men  
To bring the Wine.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Knights of the Table.*

Wine of the World,  
Blood of the life to be,  
Flow in our veins to-day.

Wine of the World,  
Red with the sun-god's kiss,  
Flame in our life to-day.

Wine of the World,  
Upon the Sacred Hill  
Purge this our Britain from her wrongs.

*With solemn tread Sir Kay's men come.  
All stand, and the butlers bring the wine to each.*

### *All.*

Wine of the World.  
By God's fair grace  
And Man's good labour won!  
Flow in our veins to-day,  
Blood of our life to be.

*There comes a runner with a letter. Arthur  
reads it.*

### *Merlin.*

Long has it lain in cellars at Tintagel,  
The goodly wine of Uther,  
Wherein he pledged Igraine,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

When Kingly love a mighty draught did take.  
King Arthur, what joy awaits us now ?

*Arthur.*

Two Kings from oversea are setting sail  
To steal this land of ours.  
The bond of the Table Round,  
The fellowship of danger, together weld us.  
Naught need we fear  
Nor need we hurry till their sails,  
Like to their breasts are full of wind.

*The trumpet blows without. A press of feet.  
In the doorway stands Sir Launcelot.  
When all the guests have seen  
The Knight of the Golden Name  
A mighty shout goes up  
To Launcelot and his fame.  
In Britain or in Bretagne stands  
Launcelot the noblest Knight,  
And in further and loner lands  
Has Sir Launcelot's sword shone bright.  
Many the weak who have suffered wrong  
Have found the sword of Launcelot strong.  
Oft shall the Festal Hall of Arthur  
Echo his name in song.  
'Mid the laughing eyes of the ladies  
And the joyful shouts of the men*

*Sir Launcelot cometh homeward  
To Camelot again.  
Than Joyous Gard more joyous  
Is the Court of Arthur now.*

*Arthur.*

Welcome, Sir Launcelot, fresh from glory  
And all thy glowing deeds.  
Come to our Table, Leodogan's Table,  
And greet, I pray thee, Leodogan's daughter,  
My bride.  
Guenever, look thou on Launcelot,  
Who at our need is come.  
Drink from our Cup, Sir Launcelot !  
Drink of the great Wine  
That kindled the love of my sire !

*Launcelot.*

To King and Queen I drink !  
Right glad am I  
Again to come to Arthur's Court  
In time of joy, in time of need.  
For the hour of Britain's need is our joy.  
Let the dogs from oversea  
Their visit pay.  
Hast thou, Sir Kay, well-named the Porter,  
Seen the lady who waits at Arthur's door ?  
*Sir Kay goes to the door with hurried step.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Arthur.*

We could have wished for peaceful hours  
In this our springtide, Guenever ?

*Guenever.*

Well were the wish for peaceful hours.  
*Sir Kay is come again—alone.*

*Sir Kay.*

O King, the lady Nimue  
Would speak to thee and Merlin.

*Arthur.*

What is her will ?

*Kay.*

From the Lake Isle is she come.

*Arthur.*

Then will we speak with her.  
O friends, goodnight, and let us all begone.  
Full many a time we'll meet again.  
Come, O Merlin.  
With thee, Sir Launcelot, I leave my lady.

*Swiftly the Hall is cleared  
That was so full and bright.  
All follow the great King  
Out into the night.  
Quiet grows the Hall*



*Where all the warriors were,  
And only two are left—  
Launcelot and Guenever.*

*Guenever.*

Though newly wed,  
The King in a week's wearing goes to war.

*Launcelot.*

He hath not made the matter, lady.  
Nor need we war for long if all be strong and  
true.  
No foeman dares to fight against the doughty.

*Guenever.*

Were I a man,  
A bridegroom, not a warrior, would I be.

*Launcelot.*

But I am glad when wars arise  
That all my fires may flare within me.

*Guenever.*

Thou art not wed.

*Launcelot.*

Yea, I am wed to war.

*Guenever.*

Thou hast no wife ?

*Launcelot.*

Yea ? that have I.

*Guenever.*

Thou dost not love her ?

*Launcelot.*

Swift was our wooing,

Slow the sorrows of our hearth !

*Guenever.*

Loves she another ?

Nay, that could not be !

*Launcelot.*

Oft is it so !

*Guenever.*

But not with thee, O Launcelot !

*Launcelot.*

She loves no other :

But I could forgive the flames, to me forbidden,  
Flaming for another.

Her heart is cold, and I must seek the bosom  
of the battle.

O Lady Guenever, it is well that thou dost love  
thy lord.

*Guenever.*

Were I thy lady,

Wouldst thou fly to war ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Launcelot.*

Then would my sword in scabbard rust !  
Burning behind the walls of the world  
Striving for birth are the Fates of To-morrow.  
Be joyful when thy lord returneth.  
Let sorrow fill thy hearth when he doth leave  
thee.  
Beware when joy and sorrow die within thee !  
They are the flame and smoke of living love !

*The firelight dies down,  
And fitful are the flames  
That glint among the twilight banners.  
How very still is all the Hall become . . .  
The shadows of Fate like dim banners are  
looming  
Behind and beyond are the deeds of to-morrow.  
At the door is the form of Arthur,  
And Launcelot, seeing him, speaks . . .*

*Launcelot.*

Goodnight, O Queen of these wide realms !  
Thou mayst count me as a trusty servant.  
Goodnight to thee, O Arthur !

*Sir Launcelot goes,  
Again to come to Arthur's Hall.  
But now alone are King and Queen,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*In the festal Hall of Arthur  
Where echo the names of song.  
The son of Uther . . . Arthur . . .  
Born of Igraine, the faery Queen of Cornwall . . .  
And Guenever, King Leodogan's daughter,  
A stately girl of fairest English beauty. . . .  
Silent the Hall of Arthur,  
And scant the glimmer of the firelight,  
Which glints on Arthur,  
And gleams on Guenever.*

*Arthur.*

Now are they gone, O Guenever ?

*Guenever.*

And Guenever alone is left to thee !

*Arthur.*

My wife and Queen !

*The firelight flickers and fades,  
But dimly are they seen.*

*Guenever.*

The glory's gone ?

*Arthur.*

But a girl is here,  
Who is a glory !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*King Arthur's arm round Guenever is cast,  
And she less proud in look than at the banquet  
seems.*

*Guenever.*

Dost thou regret the day  
When first we met ?

*Arthur.*

It is a sorrow  
That we met not sooner !

*The pair of lovers, who in shadow linger,  
No more are thoughtful of the gold and purple.  
But of the bond which holds them,  
The cord of flesh and spirit woven.*

*Guenever.*

Dost thou call to mind  
How at Cameliard I brought thee water  
To wash the dust of travel from thee ?

*Arthur.*

Aye ! And the dust of years,  
And all unworthy days !

*Guenever.*

But in a week  
Thou goest to the war.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Arthur.*

The Kings from oversea have sought it.  
It shall go hard with those  
Who keep me from thee !

*Guenever.*

Can we not dwell in peace ?

*Arthur.*

Peace is blazoned on the banners of Britain.  
He is no Briton,  
Who strives for aught but freedom,  
That in good time,  
The people of our island dwell  
In love and liberty !

*Guenever.*

Why do the fierce Kings strive !

*Arthur.*

Ask me not now why strife shall come  
When I in love would dwell with thee.  
Let us not think of joys that may not be  
For swift the hours of Love are gone.

*Guenever.*

Did not the Bard o'er praise me ?

*Arthur.*

Taliesin's song was cold.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Would that I had the bardic voice, and harper's  
power !

I'd sing of love and Guenever,  
As never bard nor minstrel sang.

*In both strong arms he holds her,  
While Taliesin's song within their breasts up-  
surgeth.*

*Of him did he sing who sits enthroned in glory,  
Till to greater glory shall he come !*

*Of beauty and all the body's glory did he sing !*

*Nay, for 'tis the bridal day of Arthur,*

*When the Lady Guenever is here !*

*She, like the Dawn, to Camelot is come !*

*She is as are the birds of Rhianon,*

*Who charm away old sorrow's memory.*

*Arthur.*

I love thee, Guenever, so that I cannot tell thee  
Whether by thought or touch or feeling thou  
art mine !

I know not, Guenever, as now I hold thee  
Whether this beating heart is mine or thine !

*Guenever.*

I care not, Arthur,  
So it beateth strongly !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Behold there lie jewels in the Lake of Wonder.  
All the beauty of the world may bathe there,  
And they who are wise take thence a jewel.  
Twain and twain they hasten to the woods of Love.  
The arms of Arthur strain around his lady,  
And closer clings to him Queen Guenever.*

*Arthur.*

*The firelight flickers  
So let us begone, my Love and Queen !  
Love's purple curtain falls on Guenever and  
Arthur . . .  
Glory and praise to Love !  
To King and Queen be praise !  
Praise to the festal Hall of Arthur,  
And the nuptial night of Song !  
Sound loud the joyful trumpet !  
The throbbing strings with wind and drums  
combine  
To sound the praise of Love,  
Of Arthur and his bride !  
But beyond are the burning fires of bale.  
Baneful and sorrowful frown the strange weavers,  
Weaving and weaving desire on desire.  
Yearning to break through the walls of their world  
Rise the strange weavers and ply the swift looms.  
Not Peace but a Sword shall deliver.  
Not Joy but a Wound shall heal.*



### ACT III

#### PRELUDE

*In the midst of the Lake of Wonder  
Lies an isle of peace . . .  
The waters of the Lake around it lapping,  
When the wind is fresh . . .  
The leaves of the trees rustling to the bend of the  
boughs.  
But wind is laid to rest this even,  
And on the air hangs the scent of violets.  
Th'exhaling fragrance and the quiet stillness  
weave their spell.  
The Lady of the Lake weaves her web and her  
spell,  
From the odour of flowers, the hues of the sunset,  
And the heart's desire.  
The ruby rays of the sun shine through the foliage.  
Upon the Lake they fall,  
Like the lure of the fruit of the vine pressed to wine,  
And glorious glows the sunset isle of rest.  
The Lady of the Lake upon a bank of violets rests,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Her arm uncovered in its whiteness  
Raises her from the purple robe beneath her  
spread.*

*The sunset Queen is clad in purple.  
From her bosom gleams a ruby.  
Dark as the mere at midnight is her hair.  
Her face knows not age nor death :  
Nor human joy nor sorrow dwells there.*

*Caught in a net of wonder,  
Far from the world of man,  
From sorrow cut asunder,  
A witch of wonder, not a human woman.  
Fairer than any,  
In beauty everlasting,  
In wisdom deeper !*

*Less fair than many,  
Since she lack the love light,  
The far-off spirit kindling human hearts,  
Herself unsought, unwon.  
Forward bending from the bank of violet,  
She hears the sound of oars.*

*The boatmen swing the barge along :  
The music of the oars  
Breaks on the stillness of the Isle,  
And on the Lady's dream . . .  
The boatmen swing the barge along,  
To the shore of the sunset isle.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The sinuous form of the Lady  
Sways as the boatmen bend.  
As the barge glides up to the selvage,  
Merlin and Arthur rise.  
First steps the King ashore, and to her bows,  
And she up-rising holds her hand to him.  
With gracious ease and smile he takes it,  
Sealing his homage with a kiss,  
In token of this meeting made by Merlin,  
Who, standing by the barge, bows greeting. . . .*

*Merlin.*

O sunset Queen, King Arthur needs the  
sword.

*Lady.*

Is he worthy of Excalibur ?

*Merlin.*

He is most worthy !  
With Excalibur shall sin be slain,  
If Arthur wield it.  
For this shining blade is the sword  
Which shall free the fettered slave,  
And drive the tyrant to the dark.

*Lady.*

Ho ! Nimue ! Go to the cave, and bring  
Excalibur !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The voice of the lady, like a trumpet clear,  
Strikes through the air with magic sound.  
Deeper the hues of sunset glow  
In the web of the net of wonder,  
And the sound of the voice's spell.  
The sword of Earth is broken.  
By mystic power we live.  
The fair witch Nimue has heard the voice,  
And beareth the wonder sword :  
Set in a scabbard, wrought with gems  
Is the shining blade of the sword.  
The hilt like a cross is shapen.  
In the midst of the cross a ruby glows,  
The hue of the life of man,  
The colour of sunset and of sorrow.  
The scabbard shines with lesser jewels,  
Merry twinkling points of light :  
The gleam of opals, dazzling diamonds,  
And misty gleaming stones.  
And one there is like to the stone of Merlin,  
Which gleams upon his breast.*

*Arthur.*

O Lady of the Lake, thy sword I see !  
No worthy sword have I, by many wars  
surrounded,  
And thou, in thy lake isle, art free from sorrow,  
And any need of sword.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

What gifts have I wherewith to buy it from thee ?

Some precious stone of Ind amid thy hair to shine ?

To glow and glimmer as the drooping sun

Doth play upon the waters of thy sunset isle !

*Lady.*

The sword is thine, great Arthur, and the glory.

No gift of thine shall lessen what I give.

But when no more thou needest aid of sword

I charge thee that thou fling it to the water.

Till then thy succour, afterward thy curse and doom eternal !

*Arthur.*

So will I, Lady.

*Lady.*

One truth I need to tell thee, mighty Arthur.

Though mighty is the sword, yet is the scabbard stronger !

*Arthur.*

What mean thy words ?

*Lady.*

I speak as saith my soul.

*Arthur.*

O Merlin, in thy wisdom hear these words !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

How may blunt scabbards overcome the  
sharpened sword-blade ?

*Merlin.*

Wise is the scabbard in the sheathèd time of  
peace :

Strong is the sword when trumpets sound.

In wisdom live we, but in strife we die.

*The Lady holds the sword toward Arthur . . .*

*The scabbard shines with stones,*

*The gleam of opals, dazzling diamonds,*

*And misty gems of Ind,*

*But chief among them is the mystic glow*

*Whose twin on Merlin's breastplate shineth.*

*The Lady holds the hilt to Arthur,*

*Who takes it from her hand.*

*Lady.*

O Nimue, cast you my cloak upon me,

And thou, O King, Excalibur shalt take.

I give this shining blade to free thy people.

And all the wisdom of its graven scabbard,

Shall, by the magic of my spells,

Upon thy heart be graven.

Farewell, O King ! Merlin, to thee, farewell !

*Again she holds her hand to Arthur,*

*And on it falls the ruby light,*

*Colour of sunset and of sorrow.*

*. . . Merlin to the barge has gone,  
 And Nimue near him lingers. . . .  
 Arthur raises her hand, and bows his lips upon it.  
 Then turns he, with the sword,  
 And to the barge goes swiftly.  
 The Lady of the Lake, her purple cloak around  
     her,  
 Clad in the sunset hues,  
 Watches the barge glide slowly . . .  
 From the bank it goes . . .  
 The boatmen swing the barge along  
 To the woodland shore beyond.  
 The drip of their oars is all their song,  
 For the fading sunset o'er the scene  
 The colour of sorrow casts.  
 And when they come to the farther shore,  
 The leagues before them lie,  
 And the moon will flood the woods of love  
 'Fore Arthur's roof is nigh.  
 And while the boat o'er the water sped  
 The Lady watched it go ;  
 With a sigh she murmured low :  
 " Were I a mortal maid," she said,  
 " I would the young King Arthur wed."  
 Around her all the sunset glow  
 Its ruddy radiance in a stream  
 Upon the Isle is shed.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*"I'm but the creature of a dream,"  
To Nimue she said.  
Nimue and the Lady go,  
When the darkness droops her cloak.  
The Isle of sunset fades to sight . . .  
Another day is done . . .*

*Behold there lie jewels in the Lake of Wonder,  
That lies about the sunset isle of rest.  
They who have bathed there take a jewel thence.  
Twain and twain quit they the waters,  
And hasten to the woods of love.  
To the woodland came King Arthur's barge,  
And through the wood went he with Merlin.  
Through the trees gleams the moonlight,  
As when on white Igraine  
The moonbeams shone.  
Then come they to a clearing  
Where a fallen tree  
Before them lies.*

*Arthur.*

*Here would I rest awhile !  
Art thou not weary, Merlin,  
With these so many miles of walking ?*

*Merlin.*

*No weariness of body 's mine.  
Liefer would my tired soul its dwelling take*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Within the living trunk of some great tree,  
Than rest beside thee on that forest corse !

*Arthur.*

Is thy soul sad ?  
This tree's a seat most fit for foresters,  
And freer than a throne !

*Merlin.*

A hundred years my soul has dwelt within one  
temple.  
In many bodies have I dwelt before,  
And it is time that, like this tree,  
In some dim forest I might lay me down !  
For many years I've ruled o'er mind and body,  
But not for aye, and aye !

*Arthur.*

Nay ! sadden not my soul,  
For there are many deeds before me !  
Too long I've tarried with the Queen after our  
marriage,  
But with Excalibur I go to meet the Kings !

*Merlin.*

Thou hast not stayed too long,  
For is not human love  
As natural to our blood as sterner duties ?

*Arthur.*

Well could I tarry till the stars die out,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And all the heavenly host should melt away.  
But if thou still would'st have me lighten  
    Britain  
I must not melt amid the flames of love !

*Merlin.*

Young love is not like to that later flame  
That burns a man who is as dry as tinder.  
Thou and the Queen may love in safety,  
And live enchanted lives amid the fires.

*Arthur.*

O that our love like the fires upon our hearth  
    shall burn !  
When I return from war to feel its warmth,  
To see our children gathered round it !  
That is my dream, the depth of my desire !  
And all my days I so desire to live  
That all my people like their King shall dwell !  
Now will we journey homeward.

*Merlin.*

Arthur, to thee I say good-bye for ever !

*Arthur.*

Nay ! Many years are thine.

*Merlin.*

The purple vault of heaven has willed it.  
My work is done, my day is over !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

'Tis far past sunset, and by to-morrow's Dawn  
Shall I be dead.

*Arthur.*

Dead ?

*Merlin.*

As men know Death,  
But as deliverance for the mind of Merlin,  
Who hath outlived his dwelling !  
A full surrender of the soul  
To the power that gave it body.  
On a time 'twas to me given to know my in-  
most purpose :  
To read the secret union of clay and chaos,  
The mystery of mind and soul and body.  
Farewell, great King !

*From the tree trunk Arthur starts,  
Roused by quick fear*

*Arthur.*

I knew not that thou couldst die, O Merlin.  
Thou who life didst plan within the Cornish  
Castle :  
Thou who didst raise the Table Round.  
When thou art gone, no guide is left.

*Merlin.*

A little while of storm and sorrow,  
Then shall the Grail-light come,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

A stainless knight alone assay it.  
Canst thou do this, O Arthur ?  
A stalwart knight, maiden in soul and body,  
According to my ken shall see a vision,  
A mystery more mighty than my magic.

*Arthur.*

Nay ! it cannot be !

*Merlin.*

Thou hast destroyed a hope,  
And mingled with the draught of Death  
The taste of gall.

*Arthur.*

It hath a sorrow been  
Since Guenever within my vision came.  
Yet many prayers and fasts atone  
For human ills.

*Merlin.*

We mix our cup and drink it.  
What thou hast done is not unwrought by  
prayer,  
But by penance shall thy soul be purged.  
Farewell, great King, farewell !

*Arthur.*

Farewell, thou father of my destiny and  
kingdom !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Toward the shadow of the forest goes King Arthur,  
While Merlin, with bowed head, looks after . . .  
Into the shadow goes the King . . .  
The forest closes on him . . .  
Tho' far has he wandered,  
His step lies homeward . . .  
Into the shadow . . .  
And sorrow . . .  
Glory and . . .  
Death.  
The moon  
Still shining  
Through the branches,  
In light bathes Merlin,  
Standing in the clearing . . .  
Himseems he heareth footsteps,  
Light and faery footsteps,  
Coming through the moonlight,  
Shining through the trees . . .  
Himseems he heareth footsteps . . .  
Nimue's light footsteps . .  
Not for her the shadow,  
While the light of love lasts,  
For she loveth Merlin,  
And the Mage's magic.  
Like a moonlight faery,  
Coming through the trees.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Like a spirit gowned in purple,  
Smiling amid the gleaming moonlight,  
Stands she at length before the mighty mage. . . .*

*Nimue.*

The King is gone, I ween.

*Merlin.*

Aye, he is gone . . .

*Nimue.*

Thou art sad, Beloved :  
When I have brought thee thy love belated.

*Merlin.*

Know you the secret of my power,  
The magic of my dominion,  
And whence it is ?

*Nimue.*

From the woods of Love,  
And the gleaming witchery of Night ?

*Merlin.*

Because none has held me thrall :  
Because no eyes have shone 'tween mine and  
truth :  
Because no lips have driven wisdom from my  
mouth :  
No hand has been my fetter,  
No hair my chain,  
No bosom my prison !

*Nimue.*

And art thou happy, Merlin ?

*Merlin.*

This isle of Britain has felt my power.

*Nimue.*

Is there one to whom thy soul is open ?

*Merlin.*

The ages shall remember Merlin.

*Nimue.*

In thine age is there no room for love ?

*Merlin.*

Nimue, why dost thou tempt me ?

*Nimue.*

I am a witch, and not a woman.

Here and there I hover.

I love and linger and love again.

I loved thee because I deemed thee younger  
than thy years !

But now I ween thou art a dotard,

Dry as a mountain torrent in the summer !

*Merlin.*

So Merlin, who doeth aught,

Is not the equal of a churl in love ?

*Nimue.*

If thou canst read the stars,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And know the beasts,  
And guide the ways of men,  
Is any lack of wisdom meet?

*Closer nestles Nimue to Merlin.  
Like to an ivy plant twines she around him.  
Her hair around his neck she binds,  
And holds him prisoner.*

*Nimue.*

Let these lips sweeten the wisdom in thy  
mouth!  
Let these hands be thy fetters,  
This hair thy chain,  
And this bosom thy prison, . . . for . . . an  
hour . . .

*She holds him fast and presses kisses on him.  
Close nestles Nimue to Merlin.  
Like to an ivy plant she twines around him.  
Her hair around his neck she binds,  
And holds him prisoner.*

*Merlin.*

The chain is sweet with scents and perfume!  
The fetters are soft and fair.  
White is the prison where I'll lay my head,  
And red the lips that plead.  
Come, Nimue, to the woods we wend . . .



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Merlin bathes his face in Nimue's hair.  
She holds his wrist with both her hands . . .  
Then moving slow, with sylphlike rhythm,  
She draws him toward the wood . . .  
Among the trees they wend,  
And all the woods grow drear  
Till naught is left to view. . . .  
The Mage is undone,  
By the wiles of the witch.  
Till the Dawn will they linger.  
Deep are the shadows and the silences,  
Deep as Merlin's heart.  
When he went to the wood, wended a woman with  
him.  
But the Children of Enchantment live only for  
enchantment,  
And if they rebel the jewel is ta'en away.  
The Stone of Merlin's might by Nimue is  
stolen.  
O dark and cloudy night thy shadows cast !  
Strike through the mist, O Moon, and bring us  
Dawn !  
Let morning-light o'er Merlin shine.  
Let the gloom of the dusk be out-driven . . .  
A light breaks through the branches.  
The eyes of the Moon grow clear :  
In the purest rays of her vision*

*O'er the forest dull and drear.  
 The trees are like to the others,  
 Through which the lovers wended.  
 Still are we in the woods of Love,  
 In the light of the Moon, where all before was  
 twilight or the dark.  
 Amid the dark brown trunks,  
 Below the greenlit leaves,  
 A marble building stands.  
 Like a tiny ivory temple  
 From some rich clime of Ind  
 Is the marble of Merlin's shrine.  
 How calm the moon,  
 The glinting temple there !  
 How can we think of Death,  
 On such a night as this !  
 At one end is a doorway  
 Where one man bending low  
 Might enter the deathly casket,  
 And lay him down to rest.  
 To the wind are the windows open,  
 For the wind shall wail her death song  
 O'er the corse of the mighty mage.  
 With precious marble he built it,  
 Secret with many spells.  
 With cunning hand he wrought it,  
 Lone in the forest far.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*And o'er the lintel is written,  
"Cursed be they who enter  
The casket of Merlin's corse."*

. . . . .

*The wind blows through the windows,  
And on the ivory whiteness,  
The moonbeams shine . . .  
Now hear we footsteps,  
Nimue's light footsteps,  
Merlin's dragging pace,  
Slowly coming towards us,  
Coming through the moonlight,  
Slower than the wont of Nimue alone.  
Far in front of Merlin  
Cometh Nimue.  
Not for her the shadows  
While the life of love lasts,  
Coming through the trees.  
When she sees the Temple  
Reared for Merlin's body,  
Great is grown her wonder.  
When she reads the words there,  
Spelling out the letters,  
Looks she round for Merlin,  
Who, more slow than is his wont,  
Cometh through the trees . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Nimue.*

So here is laid thy Tomb !  
Within a wood thy sepulchre is set !

*Merlin.*

Within a wood, without thy wiles I'll be :  
And lay within that shrine my silver hair,  
To give to man the godlike gold.

*Nimue.*

What mean you, Merlin ?

*Merlin.*

Thou art a fair witch, Nimue,  
And age comes not anigh thee,  
Because thou drawest from thy lovers' hearts  
The fresh'ning springs of Love.  
Thus read I thee,  
And thus the riddle of the world !

*Nimue.*

Can I read thee, O Merlin !

*Merlin.*

It is not like.

*Nimue.*

And I know why, O traitor !  
While I have yielded up my soul to thee,  
In fragrant sacrifice,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

When twilight's waned to us as we have wandered

Amid this haunted forest,

Till the Dawn hath beamed her opal light upon us,

My soul has faded.

Thou art not mine.

The magic Stone mars the twin beauty of mine eyes.

*Merlin.*

I am not thine.

Nor, Nimue, am I mine own !

If any ask thee, " Who was Merlin ? "

Thus shalt thou say !

There was a mage who won Igraine for Uther,

And set King Arthur on the throne of Britain.

There was a bard who warmed the hearts of Britons.

There was a guide for Arthur and a trusty watchman.

There was the Table Round, whose oak was hewn by Merlin.

Within the heavens there are stars,

Which to the Seer are the fiery writing

Upon the veil of Night 'neath which her splendours lie.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Nimue.*

Nay rather shall I say :—

“He gave a world for me !”

Naught cared he for veiled splendours of the  
Night

When in the end he loved.

*Merlin.*

Tush ! Thinkest thou that when I bathe my  
feet

I worship water and forego the world ?

My Tomb is set within the woods of love,

As well I wotted when I set it there.

And now I enter this fair shrine of Death.

My strength is nearly spent, my force is shed !

*Slowly toward the tomb he wends,*

*And low-bending stands therein.*

*Old and bowed within the tomb,*

*Through the window is he seen of Nimue.*

*Merlin.*

Within this Tomb I stand, O Nimue.

My day is done.

Through all my limbs a numbness creeps.

The wine within my veins its vigour loseth.

I lay my head upon an agelong pillow.

A hundred years are gone !

My shrine is open to the winds !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

But whoso cometh o'er the threshold,  
As 'tis written o'er the lintel,  
Is accursed. . . .

*Slowly within the tomb he bends,  
And lays his head upon an agelong pillow.*

*Merlin.*

White is the prison where I lay my head.  
Within my tomb I lie, O Nimue.  
The fragrant Dawn,  
Brings in the Day.  
The wine within my veins is growing colder. . . .  
My head is laid upon an agelong pillow.  
My work is done,  
The world's work yet to do !

*Nimue.*

Art thou near Death, O Merlin ?  
Say thou dost but jest ?  
*No word . . . of Merlin . . .*  
I dare not cross the threshold . . .  
*No word . . . of Merlin . . .*  
What is the world's work, Merlin ?  
. . . *No sound . . .*  
Hast thou no word ?  
*No word . . . no sound . . .*  
'Twas Death . . . *diminuendo* . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Merlin.*

To Dream and then to Do !

*Nimue.*

What mean you, Merlin ?

I am in terror, and the Dawn comes cold . . .

*Merlin.*

I hear the dripping oars of Death . . .

Now I'm away from Earth, I see . . .

All that lives is holy . . .

Sunlight and the living beasts and trees,

The fields and forests,

And Man unfettered . . .

*Nimue.*

Thy words are strange . . .

Hast thou no word for me ?

*Merlin.*

Dream your heaven, O earthlings . . .

Then take the loom of life . . .

And weave it

Britons, ye are the thralls of God,

But ye may be as princes in the Kingdom.

I've given you warp and woof . . .

The world is well, the body fair, . . .

Do naught that gives no joy !

Let Love be in your labour, O World !

All needs fulfilled :



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

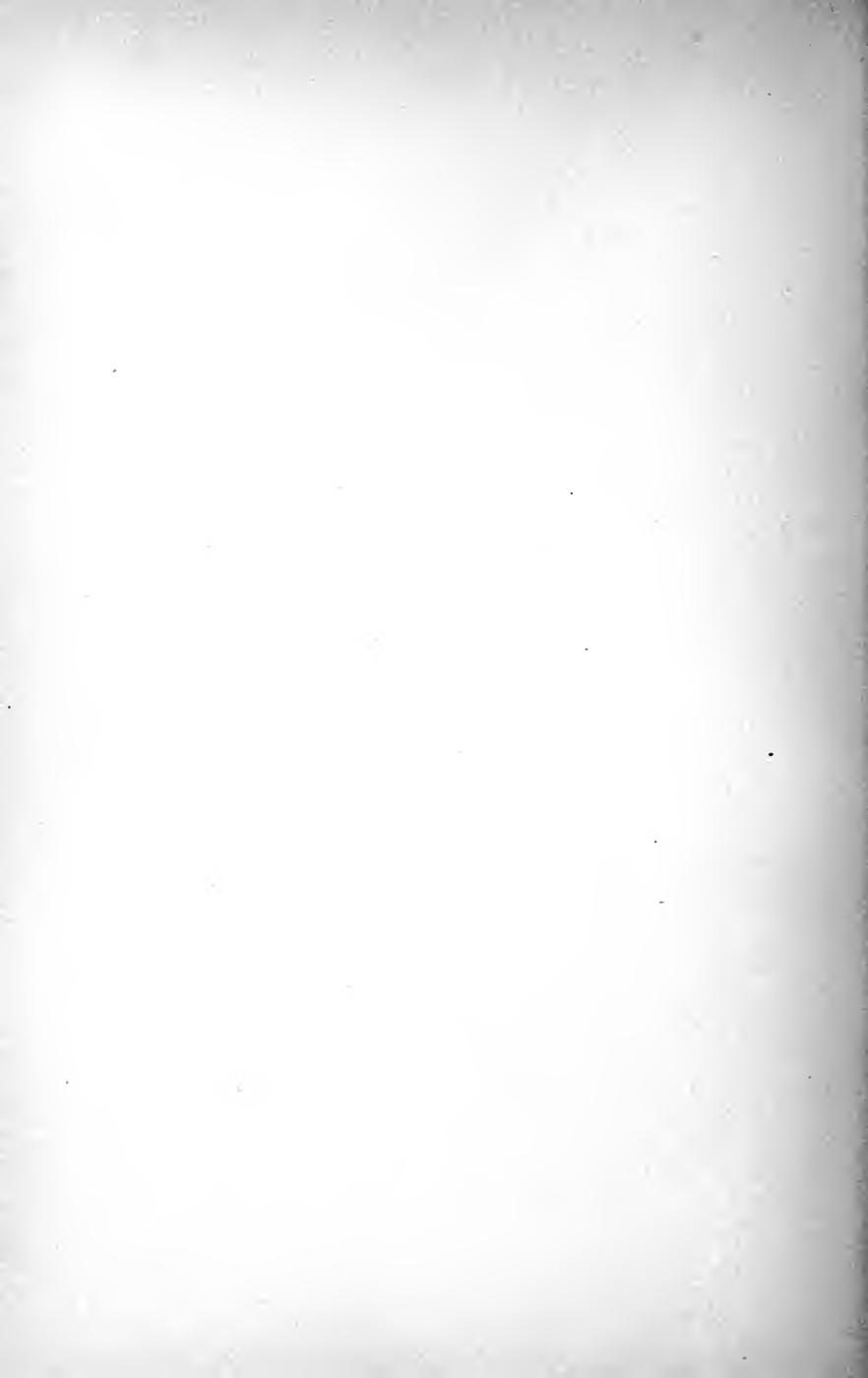
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All strength beyond, to Love and joy be sacred.  
Death ! in joy I welcome thee !  
Death ! thou hast shown me Life !  
Lead me Beyond. . . .

*Dead . . . as men know Death . . .*  
*But as deliverance . . . to the mind of Merlin . . .*  
*Gone to his forest dwelling !*  
*The morning-light upon his temple strikes,*  
*Where Merlin lies . . . dead . . .*  
*But 'tis the Dawn.*



THE HOLY GRAIL



## CHARACTERS

MORGAN LE FAY	-	-	-	Half-sister of Arthur
GUYOMAR	-	-	-	A Squire.
MORDRED	-	-	-	The Bastard
ARTHUR	-	-	-	The King
LAUNCELOT	-	-	-	
GUENEVER	-	-	-	
DAGONET	-	-	-	
DINADAN	-	-	-	A Knight
BEDIVERE	-	-	-	
GALAHAD	-	-	-	Son of Sir Launcelot
KAY	-	-	-	
GAWAINE	-	-	-	A Knight
NACIEN	-	-	-	A Hermit
THE GRAIL KING	-	-	-	
A PHYSICIAN	-	-	-	

Voices of the Isle, of the Vision, Men and Maids of  
the Grail.

ACT I

SCENE       -       -       The Chamber of Morgan le Fay

ACT II

SCENE       -       -       -       -       - The Hall of Arthur

ACT III

SCENE       -       -       A Clearing in the Forest outside  
                              Nacien's Hut.

ACT IV

SCENE       -       -       -       The Castle of the Holy Grail

PART III

THE HOLY GRAIL

ACT I

PRELUDE

*Deep are the sorrows of a wounded world.  
Like sad unfragrant incense are her sighs,  
The smoke of bitter herbs ascends  
The pathway of the sacred stair . . .  
Strong are the pains of birth . . .  
Heavy the hand that opes Death's portal . . .  
But keenest are the pangs of those,  
Whose weary bodies wait  
In hope that door at last shall close . . .  
Agelong is Pain, springing from the first Birth.  
Pain was the first child of human Passion :  
Strength was his father and his mother Beauty.  
But they twain sinned, and base grew their  
desires.  
Guilt was born, and gross shapes in human form  
came forth.*

*Children of Pain all mortals are :  
 Many in strength and beauty grow :  
 Others in shapes of guilt and sin,  
 Cloth'd in Death's garb await their doom.  
 Some in Sorrow's cloak are clad,  
 And in their bodies feel the scourge.  
 Made pure by Pain, by chastening are they chaste.  
 For Pain's meridian is past . . .*

*There was a Garden where no fragrance flowered.  
 The plants were bitter herbs, the trees in anguish  
 grew.*

*In Sorrow's Garden stayed the Man of Sorrows  
 Until Death's Doom was broken . . .  
 Pain and guilt and gall,  
 The flowers of grief and gloom . . .  
 A Cross, the symbol of Sorrow . . .  
 There was a Tomb within a Garden,  
 Where Death might sleep  
 In a world's sorrow sealed . . .*

*There was a Tomb within a Garden,  
 Whence Life must rise,  
 In a world's glorious laughter . . .  
 The joy of the conquest of Death,  
 Sorrow's dragon slain.  
 From the black cave of death 'twas driven,*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Might of Magic,  
Dominion of devils,  
Vassals of Death !*

*Yet a devildom remaineth . . .  
For beauty ever reigneth,  
And evil in a body's beauty  
Shall shine more fair,  
Than all the flowers of heaven.  
A serpent's eyes are bright,  
Oft a saint's are sad.  
Fasting and prayer unite to make men glad in  
spirit,  
But the body's temple gleams  
More lovely in the dreams of hell.  
From the caverns of Chaos evil is driven,  
Driven from those who of sorrow are shriven.  
Those who are mighty of soul are free,  
Lovers whose magic shall never be riven.  
Those who toil are free, when great ascendant  
hopes  
Goad on the soul and body.  
All who are stricken shrink from sin.  
All who are mighty fear its fangs.  
A serpent's eyes are bright,  
A supple body fair :  
The eyes of a serpent bright,  
A woman's form and hair :*

*The wiles of the ways of night,  
 The words of the true and fair.  
 The wiles of the ways of night  
 Are the web of a fateful loom.  
 A wonder will they weave,  
 A wonder full of doom.  
 Evil and good to-day  
 Are the warp and the woof of Life,  
 And a wonder will they weave  
 From a world of sin and strife.  
 Weave they the souls of men,  
 Desires and senses mingle,  
 Till the world of the future stands  
 In the waking eyes of the soul.*

*Dream your heaven, O earthlings,  
 Then take the loom of Life and weave it !  
 Of the world's joy and sorrow,  
 Of its good and of its evil,  
 Weave a world anew :  
 Amid the strains of nuptial feast,  
 Where all the senses pure of sin,  
 In golden days of free desire,  
 Their full parts play  
 Like full and lusty trumpets.  
 And music of sounding horns,  
 With the lute and all the luring tribe of strings,  
 Bring forth in adoration . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*But we walk mid the ways of night,  
And the wiles of a lady fair . . .  
Morgan le Fay her name . . . Arthur's sinful  
sister.*

*The chamber of Morgan le Fay  
Is heavy with strange perfume.  
Like a lurid Eastern queen  
On a divan she sits.  
Not far away a loom  
Waits for her warp and woof,  
And by her side there rests  
The young squire, Guyomar.*

*The room is fairly hung  
With curtains of darkest blue,  
For this is the chosen hue  
Of Morgan le Fay and Mage.  
Her clinging robe is blue,  
Like an embrace it holds her.  
Full and free as her scarlet lips  
Is her shapely pulsing form.  
Like fair ripe fruit on the tree of Life  
Is Morgan le Fay and Mage.  
The lady and squire sit  
On a broad divan,  
Its coverings broidered with Eastern form and  
colour . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*In her hands she holds a skein of golden silk . . .*

*Morgan le Fay.*

Come, wind for me the thread,  
The golden thread I weave !

*She holds the silken skein  
Looped on her shapely hands.*

*Guyomar.*

Gladly I'll wind the thread.

*Holding his hands apart  
She puts the thread thereon.  
Thus, sitting on the couch,  
Each of them turned to each,  
She winds the golden thread . . .  
The room is weird and dim.  
Like a wraith sits Morgan le Fay.  
Guyomar watches her,  
But she ne'er heedeth him.*

*Guyomar.*

What wonder will you weave ?

*Morgan.*

What wonder shall I weave ?  
A wonder gold and green !  
Of a paradise I know,  
In a world where grow  
The fruits of things unseen.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Guyomar.*

What things happen there ?

*Morgan.*

I know not yet . . .

Till the loom begins,

And the shuttle flies . . .

Fast the daylight dies,

And the lights should come.

*“ Ho, ho ! ” she cries,*

*And her maids are come.*

*Goodly lights they bring,*

*With shades of red.*

*The winding stops till the curtains are drawn.*

*Then the maids go forth,*

*And they're left alone.*

*Guyomar.*

What men and beasts in the strange land dwell ?

*Morgan.*

Let chance be guide !

What I weave beside

Is the willing of unseen worlds.

*The lamps of Morgan le Fay*

*Have shades of a glowing red,*

*And a ruby light they shed*

*On the youth and the lady fair . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dark is her beauteous hair,  
And her beauty full and free.*

*Guyomar.*

O Lady Morgan le Fay, thou art most beautiful !

*Morgan.*

Ha ! Ha ! my lad.

Wind on ! Wind on !

*Guyomar.*

What gift, O lady ?

*Morgan.*

Thou mayest wind, and give me naught !

*Guyomar.*

What gift hast thou for me ?

That is my asking !

*The lady laughs*

*Both loud and free.*

*Morgan.*

For thee ! For thee ? Well . . . well ! We'll  
see . . .

Ask what thou most desirest !

*Guyomar.*

Wilt thou, a sister of King Arthur, give it ?

*Morgan.*

Wind on ! Let me wind !

Thou art most fair and lusty.

Well might I give thee much.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Guyomar.

Thyself!

Morgan.

Many have sought that gift.

Some have sorrowed . . .

Some have been joyful.

Whether Yea or Nay

Has brought most sadness . . . I know not . . .

*They have wound the thread,*

*And their fingers touch . . .*

*Then their hands are clasped,*

*Their eyes have met. . . .*

*The ruby light of the lamp is shed*

*On the burning passionate face of each.*

*. . . Closer they come . . .*

*. . . In his arms she rests . . .*

*In fear the lad at his bold embrace*

*Unwinds his arms,*

*But she holds him fast.*

*She is mad with love,*

*And his lips she seeks . . .*

*The ruby rose of the lamps is shed*

*With lurid light on their fond embrace.*

*Not the leaves and petals of love is theirs,*

*But the burning passionate heart of the rose.*

*From her wild and reckless lips he draws*

*The fire and wine of forbidden love . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Till they seem aware of a passer-by.*

*A curtain moves . . .*

*A form goes by . . .*

*Guyomar.*

It was the Queen.

Our love is all undone.

*Morgan.*

Nay, Guyomar.

'Twas but the tuning of our harp.

The melody of love is sweeter !

*Guyomar.*

Wilt thou be my love despite the Queen ?

*Morgan.*

Should Guenever a lover lose me,

A husband shall she lose !

*Guyomar.*

To slay the King ! Ah, no !

*Morgan.*

I will a wonder weave,

A wonder gold and green.

There's one who may become

A lover of the Queen. . . .

And now, Guyomar, go !

*Guyomar.*

One kiss, I crave !



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Morgan.*

Thy lover's trifling irks me !  
Is't not enough that for a season  
Thou art mine ?

*Guyomar.*

But till again we meet ?

*Morgan.*

The night is here.  
The Court of Guenever is still.  
The world of dark and night  
Is here to work its will.  
Awhile I ponder here,  
And secret things I'll see,  
Then, Guyomar, the veil of night  
Shall close o'er thee and me.  
Away, away, I want my wisdom . . .  
An hour, and . . . I will fool with thee !

*Guyomar.*

What to thee is fooling  
Is to me the full mixed cup of love !

*Morgan.*

Belike . . . Begone !

*Guyomar goes, and Morgan le Fay  
Sits alone on her couch,  
And broiders a cloth dark green.*

*Dark are her thoughts  
 As mist around the Lake of Wonder.  
 Not hers the magic stone of Merlin,  
 To whom were the wonders of the deep,  
 The mysteries of the earth,  
 And the magic of the air.  
 Hers are the darkling thoughts of night,  
 And the glow of the ruddy flames.  
 Beneath her clinging robe of blue  
 Is her surging bosom, passionate heart,  
 Where lies a dire and dreadful dream.  
 Her silk is gold, her cloth is green . . .  
 Brooding there in the dead of night  
 When footfalls echo loud,  
 She hears a step . . .  
 The curtain of the chamber lifts,  
 And Mordred comes to her . . .  
 From her couch she rises . . .  
 He holds her hands . . .*

*Mordred.*

Lady, good night to thee !

*Morgan.*

Is it thou, king's son ?

*He drops her hands, and draws away.  
 Not less pale, but fiercer his eyes . . .  
 Tall, dark, proud is the young Mordred . . .  
 Though young he hath the power of manhood.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Mordred.*

Heavy that word to me.

I, the incarnate sin of Britain's saviour !

Am I Mordred, son of Arthur ?

No, I am his evil deed !

Am I the child of Orkney's Queen ?

Not their son, but their sin am I !

*Morgan.*

It grows late, Sir Mordred.

*Mordred.*

What dost thou broider ?

*Morgan.*

A wonder, gold and green,

Of trees that bear strange fruit,

I work for Orkney's Queen.

A gift from me her sister . . .

A gift from Arthur's sister.

*Mordred.*

Weave you my sire into the web ?

*Morgan.*

I but broider.

Were I a witch

On my loom I'd weave strange works.

I'm nearly human, and but broider . . . stitch  
by stitch.

Rather would I weave Launcelot than thy sire.

*Mordred.*

Loves Launcelot the Queen ?

*Morgan.*

How can I know ?

Many have kissed my lips,

Who are not lovers rightly.

With others 'tis the same ?

*Mordred.*

But Guyomar is thine ?

*Morgan.*

Art jealous, Mordred ?

Thou art too near of kin to Arthur's sister !

*Mordred.*

Loves Launcelot the Queen ?

*Morgan.*

Watch the web I weave !

*She puts her broidery down.*

*Like a spirit she glides to her loom,*

*And weaves . . . softly singing the while . . .*

Warp and woof of love,

Kings and Knights and Ladies,

At my will the shuttle shoots.

The web of their loves is strange,

And I laugh and goad or guide them !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Twice a King art thou,  
Through royal sinners twain,  
And shouldst thou come to reign  
Guyomar need not go ?

*Mordred.*

Nay ! all should freely love,  
And love should aye be free.

*Morgan.*

Let us bury the things that are,  
And build what is to be !  
Thou shalt be King, my lad,  
In the days that are to be.

*Mordred.*

How wilt thou work ?

*Morgan.*

Launcelot loves the Queen,  
And Arthur lives in her.  
We will bury the King, my lad,  
In the sins of Guenever.  
We will break his proud high heart,  
And the rest were easy, boy !

*Mordred.*

But his men, and the Table Round ?

*Morgan.*

Know'st thou at the Castle of the Holy Grail ?

*Mordred.*

Aye ! Galahad oft muses on its might.

*Morgan.*

There the heavenly powers are housed.  
'Gainst them we cannot hope to strive.  
Hell and all her armies were absolved,  
And all their fiery passion purged away  
Did they assail the Holy Castle.  
But Arthur sets not all his faith thereon.  
Half trusts he in the glory of dominion,  
And by it will we break him.

*Mordred.*

Stop the whirring spindle,  
Thy loom like my brain whirleth.

*Morgan.*

What is woven cannot stop  
Till the wonder is all told.  
Let us see what the unseen doth  
With the web of green and gold !

*With restless gesture*

*She leaves the loom and draws near Mordred.*

*Again she takes the web . . .*

*Stitch after stitch her needle flits.*

*But though Mordred strangely looks,*

*Naught is pourtrayed as yet . . .*

*The curtain of the chamber's plucked aside.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*King Arthur comes with heavy footstep,  
Looking older . . . older . . .  
Than when the magic Merlin left him in the  
forest.  
A man, heavy with care, of purpose strong !  
Not now the young and happy hero . . .*

*Arthur.*

Mordred, the hour is passing late.

*Mordred.*

I will away, my sire.  
It is passing late,  
But I wander not alone.

*A look that bids foreboding  
On Mordred's face is spread.  
Away he wanders, but the King and Morgan  
His threat'ning brooding mood remember.*

*Arthur.*

Morgan, I come to thee with sorry purpose.  
The lad, Guyomar, is in thy toils.

*Morgan.*

Thy sister's arms too ill for Guyomar.  
Methought King Arthur's sister.  
For Galahad were meet !

*Arthur.*

Speak not the name of Galahad  
Within this chamber of thy magic sins.  
To-morrow I banish Guyomar !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Morgan.*

Thou banish Guyomar,  
Father of Mordred !

*Arthur.*

Thou art the first to add unto this burden,  
Which in my bosom never sleeps for long.  
But, by the powers on High,  
The lower sink I in my ken,  
The harder do I strive for Britain.  
A stainless King might dwell at ease  
Till a people's blessing followed him to Heaven.  
He whose heart is never free from sorrow  
By grace of God shall purge his soul of guilt !

*Stitch by stitch the needle of Morgan flies.*

*Morgan.*

Know'st thou what I broider ?

*Arthur.*

I know not.

*Morgan.*

A wonder gold and green,  
Of a lover and a Queen.  
The King had once been false,  
And Fate thus purged his guilt.  
The web is woven,  
But not yet broidered.



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Where is the Queen, good brother,  
Who sent thee to steal my lover ?

*Arthur.*

As is her wont  
With her maidens lies she.

*Morgan.*

Methought I heard without  
A voice beneath the window !

*Like to the door, her windows wear  
Dark curtains, which she softly draws aside . . .  
The fragrant night, the heavens above . . .  
Dark jewelled casket full of stars.  
The starry nuptial night where half the world is  
waiting  
Some pledge or promise of delight or hope.*

*The silvery voice of Guenever.*

Good night, Launcelot, good night !

*The voice of Launcelot with longing laden.*

My lady, till next we meet, good bye !

*Upon the air the sound is softly borne.*

*Morgan, letting fall the curtains, turns . . .*

*Morgan.*

What ails thee, man ?

I was mista'en.

'Tis but the trusty Launcelot.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

And Guenever forbiddeth me a lover !  
It cannot be as thou dost think.  
'Tis but an idle breeze  
That blows their words upon us !

*Arthur.*

'Tis not of them !  
It is the noxious fumes of this foul chamber.  
The incense which you offer up to Hell !  
I sicken.

*Morgan.*

Drink of this cup I mix,  
And on this cushion lean.  
Behind thy head I place  
The wonder gold and green.

*He drinks the potion dark,  
In a cup of heavy gold,  
And o'er his spirit comes a lull.*

*Morgan.*

Sleep, O King, and dream  
Of the wondrous world you rule !

*Morgan puts out the lights,  
The ruddy flames that burn,  
And to her loom doth turn.  
Deftly she plies it now  
To drowse the stricken King.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Swooning into the zone of dream  
His soul awakes, but his body slumbers.  
No longer the darkness presses on his brow,  
But a glimmer mid the gloom outshineth.  
Like a wayside at the dawn  
Is the landskip of his dream.  
Not in clear and natural colour,  
But in shadow, thickly, darkly,  
Is the vision seen.  
Dust and drab seems all about,  
Heavy mist and mouldy trees,  
And upon the air is borne  
A voice most lonely and forlorn,  
That cries "Unclean, Unclean!"  
Nearer it comes . . . and nearer yet . . .  
"Unclean!" it cries, "Unclean!"  
Then o'er the picture of his dream  
There steals a sickly gleam.  
Three lepers stand there, and forlorn  
Upon the laden air is borne  
The cry "Unclean, Unclean!"  
Upon the King is set their gaze.  
No hope nor any help they crave,  
But dolorous wend they to the grave.  
Uneasy is the King's prone form,  
And, raised upon his pillow,  
Thus breaks his voice upon the vision.*

*Arthur.*

Are ye the nameless horrors of the night,  
Or walk ye through the streets of Camelot?  
Oft have I seen your like,  
But it was said,  
That leprous flesh is but the wage of sin.  
Thus looked I on the leper, and his pain.  
This suffering is not sin, nor sin's reward.

*"Unclean, Unclean!" they cry . . .  
. . . and fade . . . and fade . . . away . . .  
Again the hands of Morgan  
Weave at the fateful loom.  
Then sees he knights and squires,  
With maidens mingling.  
Not these the ladies of the Court,  
But maidens of the people . . .  
They fade . . . and fade . . . away . . .  
But Morgan sees them not,  
As she weaves the web of doom.*

*Then he sees a sorrowing woman,  
Excommunicate and homeless,  
For the sin of trusting idly  
To a faithless lover . . .  
A priest in fine apparel chides her,  
Knights and ladies passing by . . .  
They fade . . . and fade . . . away . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Uneasy is King Arthur's slumber,  
And restless is his dream.  
Then come two cripples,  
And, in their company,  
Beggars with eyes all bandaged.  
All in rags and clouts are clad.  
In voices like the echo of the fretting ocean,  
And the tired horror of wailing winds,  
Thus do they chaunt. "Strong are the pains of  
Death,  
    " Heavy the waiting hand of Death."*

*Arthur.*

Where go ye ?

*"Strong are the pains of birth,  
Heavy the hand that opens not Death's portal,  
But keenest are our pains,  
Whose weary bodies wait,  
Too sore and weak to live,  
Too strong to die."  
Wearily the King upon his elbow lifts himself . . .  
Morgan from her loom arises.  
Her sinuous body bends towards the King,  
Like some weird wraith or shadow . . .*

*Arthur.*

WHY DO YE SUFFER ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*"Children of pain are we:  
Others in strength and beauty grow,  
While we in shapes of horror crawl."  
Their chaunt is done . . .  
They fade . . . and . . . fade . . . away . . .  
Morgan looketh toward the King.  
In shadow she stands.*

*Arthur.*

What means the world,  
Its sin, its pain, its sorrow?  
What mean its loves and lusts?  
What hold we mid the horror?  
*Struggling as if for air he rises . . .  
Then falls as though his arms are holding  
someone.*  
. . . I love thee . . . Guenever . . . as now  
I hold thee!  
Thee amid the world I hold . . .  
Art thou, too, tainted with the poison?  
*Thinks he of the famous one,  
The Knight of the golden name?  
Of him who came among them,  
On the nuptial night of song?  
In his brain is nightmare's burning anguish,  
The buzz and throbbing of an inward sense of  
doom,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Pressing down . . . down . . . down . . .  
The room is dark, the air is charged  
With the thunderous horror that affrights us  
When bad dreams and sickness of soul assail :  
When the brain rests not,  
But haunts us with the horrors of night,  
And of Hell . . .  
The deep delirium of his dream  
Bids him arise . . .  
With hollow voice out of the dark he cries.*

*Arthur.*

*I know not, Guenever, as now I hold thee,  
Whether this beating heart is mine or thine !  
Thou art not here . . .  
Terror is in his voice.  
I am in Hell . . .  
In the chambers of the dead . . .  
Hold me ! I am falling . . . falling . . . Hold !  
. . . I die . . .*

*Quick glideth Morgan le Fay,  
And holds the reeling King,  
Who in her arms limply sinks . . .  
Awhile she raises him,  
Then lays him down to rest,  
And soon his eyes are closed . . .  
She glides to the curtains blue*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*And draws them open wide.  
No more the night is dark,  
For the lamp of morning gleams.*

*Morgan.*

Arthur, thou sleeper, I hate thee,  
For that thou hast forbidden Guyomar,  
To whom my senses turned.  
E'en now the boy awaits me,  
While thou ravest of Launcelot's paramour . . .  
The passion which from lawless love is turned  
On thee shall fall its power !  
Mordred, from thy loins begotten, shall destroy  
thee !

*From his own loins hath he begotten this des-  
truction,  
In Merlin's sooth.*

*Morgan.*

Dim break the rays of Dawn  
O'er Mordred's land and mine.  
Faint is the light they fling  
On our mighty lord the King,  
Who weakly waits for morn.  
O once again the world of Night  
Is shrouded by the Day.  
Faint is the morning sun  
After lurid midnight fires :



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The calm of morning light  
After flame and fierce desires !

*How fair the Dawn,  
The morning light how clear,  
Can sinful plans be born  
Against the King ?  
How beauteous she stands,  
Amid the gleams of day.  
Need Arthur fear the hand  
Of Morgan called le Fay ?  
Uneasy is the sleep of Arthur . . .  
A serpent's eyes are bright,  
The body's temple gleams  
Most lovely in the dreams of Hell . . . The King  
starts . . .*

*Arthur.*

I waken . . . a lesser . . . man . . .

*Dim break the rays of Dawn,  
As they broke on Merlin's Tomb,  
Before the day of Arthur's Kingdom came to  
Noon.*

## ACT II

### PRELUDE

*No more the lurid fires,  
And lulled are the fierce desires.  
The festal Hall of Arthur is filled with peace,  
Where passion erstwhile ruled in Morgan's bane-  
ful chamber.*

*There broods a calm, as in the forest.  
Leaves are still, and winds but whisper  
Before there breaks the storm.  
For storm shall come  
Sith heavy doom is laid upon the King.  
As in the world of air so in the ways of men,  
And powers and peoples, thrones and serfdoms  
By doom and fate are shattered till there dawn the  
day,  
When all is done as now we dream.  
All Life is but a surge and storm,  
With a lull, and merry days, while greater clouds  
roll up.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*But till the womb of the world  
Bring to birth the everlasting day,  
Till man is free and all his sorrow healed,  
So shall the storm clouds gather.  
And short shall be his comfort.  
Come, O Everlasting Day, when all men's strong  
    desire  
Makes Deed the fruit of Dream !*

*Down from the rafters shadowy banners hang,  
Their colour dull and dusty in the dimness there.  
Below the colours of the Knights  
Bring life-blood to a scene so far away.  
So cloistral are the gallery and windows . . .  
The fine old fireplace, the chimney corners,  
Are rude and grand and warm.  
But far above the tattered banners hang  
In faded glory, ghostly tapestries.  
But rude and homely is the board  
Where many a feast and council has been held.  
The ruddy flame and the roaring fire,  
When the day is done !  
The flowing flagons of full red wine,  
The laughter of men in Arthur's Hall !  
The toil of the day is done,  
And the Knights good fellows are.  
All good deeds under the sun  
In fellowship are planned :*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*And sealed with a cheerful cup,  
Or with a heartsome word.  
Some dozen Knights are drinking . . .  
Slowly they move the cup and hand,  
Or sit content . . .  
Sir Galahad is there among them, and sitteth  
silent,  
His brow unclouded, and his face of flame  
As though there burned a holy fire within him.  
He sits among them, and is their fellow.  
But no man to his thought is fellow  
Save Bedivere who muses near him.  
From Dagonet to Mordred all men are his friends.*

*Dinadan.*

The Court of Arthur and the Table Round  
Are but the shadows of their former selves.

*Dagonet drinks deep, then with his fist  
Bangs loud upon the board.*

*Dagonet.*

How now, my dolorous Dinadan !  
The oak is old, but sounder than thy pate !  
As to the Court, we are the men who make it.  
Let Dinadan learn valour if the virtue lacketh.

*An older Knight, of grave and kindly meanour,  
Sitting apart, with Galahad, now speaketh . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Bedivere.*

The early zeal is fled, maybe,  
But we are strong of purpose.

*Dinadan.*

But yesternight the King was wroth with me.

*Dagonet.*

Thou wert drunk, gentle Dinadan !  
Are we then devils who mislike thee drunken ?

*Mordred.*

'Tis not of this or that,  
A lack of zeal or anger of a king,  
But 'tis the cursed spirit of the hours.  
We worship kings, not kingly deeds !  
In sainted bones we glory,  
But true flesh and blood we fear.  
Free am I to speak !  
Born royal and disowned,  
Nor King, nor Knight, nor churl am I.

*Dagonet.*

Art thou the torch to burn the old Round  
Table ?

*The eyes of Mordred gleam . . .  
His hand is clench'd.*

*Mordred.*

Yea, Dagonet, the word is thine !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Let all that's dead be burned.

Let all our faith in what is gone be aye forgotten.

As men and women let us clear all cumbrances,  
And stand unfettered like the trees,  
And like the beasts be free.

*Bedivere.*

Hold, Mordred ! When thy passion cools  
Thy words will seem too rash.

*Mordred.*

Sir Bedivere, the words will out.

In truth I speak, in truth, O Knights, pray  
hearken !

*Mordred holds his hands as though he were a  
harper,*

*And mocks the bardic manner, as he chaunteth . . .*

In these glorious times of bardic tunes,  
What is there meet for praise ?

A Court of lazy knights, luxurious ladies :

A crowd of squires and maids,

And then the churls, the cripples.

A mob of sweating sorrow and of sin !

*Bedivere.*

Hast thou forgotten Merlin ?

*Mordred.*

Not Merlin, but the dreams of Merlin

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Are my scorn.  
While priests of duty prate,  
And Kings and Queens cry "Virtue,"  
What do we see around ?

*Bedivere.*

If we but look around, Sir Mordred,  
A motley group we see.  
None are too high to fall,  
And none too low to grow and rise.  
O Galahad, hast thou no word of hope ?

*Dagonet.*

'Tis not words but Hope we lack, Sir Bedivere !  
We have better hope of words, than words of  
Hope !

*Dinadan.*

Hold, Dagonet, when thou art there,  
We have a fear of words.

*Dagonet.*

But that is naught. If thou hast valour,  
Neither word-thrust nor sword-thrust need hurt  
thee.  
But Mordred gives us a fear of hope.

*Dinadan.*

How so, Sir Fool ?

*Dagonet.*

Because his hope is to make all level.  
And we Dagonet should suffer.

*Dinadan.*

Why, I pray ?

*Dagonet.*

Because I am a King's Fool, Dinadan,  
And thou, in thine own right, a fool !

*Mordred.*

Gibber no more, Dagonet,  
And Dinadan, I trow, will bear thee company !  
Ah, Galahad ! I would I had thy dreams !

*Though but a youth, Sir Galahad like Launcelot  
looketh,*

*And all the beauty beareth*

*Of the Knight of the golden name.*

*But a look of peace that Launcelot lacks,*

*And a brow unclouded hath Sir Galahad.*

*Galahad.*

Thou hast them not, because to hold them,  
'Tis not enough to dream.

The visions of the faithful are the fruit of  
Faith,

And not the Tree.

I heard thy words, Sir Mordred, and it seems  
in sooth,



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

That thou would'st cast away the gold that I  
would burnish,  
And slay what I would heal.

*Mordred.*

I drink to a world's destruction,  
And a new world desire !

*Dagonet.*

Beyond the stars, wing'd Knight ?

*Mordred.*

Here, Dagonet !  
A world where the strong possess,  
And the weak are proud to serve.  
Where merchants take your places,  
And gold strengthens the hand,  
Not crowns the head !

*He mocks Taliesin's stately bow,  
And sitting down, quaffs a hasty cup.*

*Dagonet.*

I can foresee it !  
Fat and oily chafferers buy land and goods,  
Browbeat each other . . .  
The cunningest old devil buys the best . . . of  
wine.  
Of nightcaps . . . crutches . . . bellybands . . .  
. . . not swords forsooth . . . nor ploughs . . .  
he'll have no arms . . .

... a head ... a tadpole head ... a stomach  
... aye.

But worse, he'll buy the fairest women,  
And breed a cheping race, who'll feed upon the  
carcase of old Britain!

Ay, men, we sin our sins  
But when we grub for gold,  
Leaving good living and the open air,  
The devil comes on earth, and hell begins!

*Bedivere.*

Yea, Dagonet is right.  
If each man for himself did strive, Sir Mordred,  
Hard were the days,  
The world a wheel on which  
The backs of men were broken.

*Dagonet.*

I hear Sir Kay's loud voice.  
When dogs are barking look we for their  
masters!

*The sound of footsteps without the Hall,  
Draws nearer, ever nearer . . .  
The sound of voices mingles with the tread of the  
men.*

*He comes . . . He comes !  
And heavy thoughts are weighing upon his heart,  
But, till more certain trouble cometh,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*His woes have there no welcome.  
And with the King comes Launcelot,  
Clad in a cloak of flame.  
The red of the Knights fair gloweth  
As they follow the men of fame.  
And the festal Hall of Arthur  
Is gay with a happy throng.*

*At the Table Round they seat them . . .  
The King in his proper place . . .  
And on his right, Sir Launcelot . . .*

*Arthur.*

Sir Kay, bring wine and victual, for we have  
ridden far,  
While Bedivere and Dagonet and some few  
others  
Have chosen ale for labour.

*The eyes of Arthur are dull as the gloom of  
gathering thunder,  
Sunk in the mood of a dream.*

*Dagonet.*

Sire, is it not well chosen ?  
What Briton had rather labour than drink ale ?

*Light steals through the darkness,  
And the eyes of Arthur gleam. .  
Loud is the laughter, for only Dagonet*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dares jest with Arthur when a heavy mood is on him.*

*Sir Kay is gone forth, but now his men are come  
With meat and drink for Arthur and his Knights.*

*Arthur.*

I welcome thee, Sir Galahad, again.  
For since thou wast made Knight  
I for the first time  
Freely sit with thee at meat.

*All eyes on Galahad are turned,  
As there he sits with Launcelot's beauty,  
And more than Launcelot's power,  
Though but a youth as yet.*

*Galahad.*

Sire, I thank thee for thy grace.

*Arthur.*

Much have we heard of thee.  
I trow that thou wilt be like to thy sire in  
prowess.  
Another Launcelot, and a younger . . .  
For, Launcelot, we are past the middle age ?

*Launcelot.*

To-day than yesterday is older.  
*His tone is sad as though he broodeth . . .  
A maiden comes into the Hall,  
And timid walketh toward the Table.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dagonet.*

How now ! Dost want my cup ?

Here, darling, drink with me ?

*He holds out his cup . . .*

*The maiden shyly turns away from him.*

*Kay.*

Dagonet, art thou churl or Knight,

Thus to parley with a waiting damsel ?

*Dagonet.*

Maybe, I'm like to thee, Sir Kay,

Both churl and Knight !

*Arthur smiles.*

*The King turns, the maiden kneeling to him.*

*Arthur.*

What is thine errand ?

*Then stands the maiden.*

*Maiden.*

Sire, the Queen would come

To greet Sir Galahad.

*Arthur.*

Much would it pleasure us to see the ladies,

Unless they be outworn with all the riding.

*The maiden bows and backward to the doorway  
goeth.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*And while the Knights with meat and victual deal,  
Arthur leans upon his chair and muses . . .  
Yea, she is fair, her eyes like dawn . . .  
And like the Birds of Rhianon  
She charms away the memory of sorrow.  
He muses how, when at Cameliard she brought  
him water . . .  
"To wash the stains of travel from thee."  
The dust of years and all unworthy days . . .  
Their starry nuptial night leads on his musing . . .  
He loved her then so that he might not know  
Whether by thought or touch or feeling she was his!  
He knew not then as in his arms she lay,  
Whether their beating heart was one or twain.  
Then in Morgan's perfumed chamber,  
In dim visions, thickly, darkly  
Horror throng'd around.  
Only one thing clear before him . . .  
Bell-toned voices in the darkness . . .  
"Good-night, Launcelot" . . . "My lady, till  
next we meet, goodbye!"  
The ladies come, and gay their gowns.  
The King from his stupor rises.  
The Knights rise up, and seek their ladies.  
Some at the Table Round,  
Others on benches, or on cushions sit.  
But mostly at the Table Round are set the Knights  
who are not wed,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Bedivere, Galahad . . . Dinadan . . . are there . . .  
The King with the Queen is sitting,  
Nigh the Knight of the golden name,  
As when Sir Launcelot came there  
On the nuptial night of song.  
Queen Guenever a robe of green is wearing,  
Of such a shade as forest leaves in summer,  
The full ripe green, so fair to see . . .  
Her hair of gold upon it falls,  
The gold that turns to red, so fair to see . . .  
Not now so young, her form more full,  
But very sweet to hear, and fair to see . . .*

*Guenever.*

Sir Galahad, I greet thee.  
Like thy sire, Sir Launcelot, art thou !  
I am most glad to see thee, Galahad.  
Both for thy valour, and his name.  
*The eyes of Guenever with pleasure shine,  
And near her mouth a dimple showeth,  
For very joy of looking on the Knight.  
King Arthur toward her turns . . .  
His hand seeks Guenever's and holds it,  
And she . . . a look . . . almost of love . . .  
Sheds on her husband . . .*

*Galahad.*

Very kind are thy words, O Queen,  
And truly will I serve the King and thee !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Launcelot.*

Too much, O Arthur, has been said of me.  
I am not mighty, but some golden days  
Have crowned me with a fame I won not.  
And in time to come,  
I feel as though a doom should seek me,  
And drape me in a shroud more black than  
death !

*Arthur.*

Nay, Launcelot, nay !

*A smile of wonder spreads  
O'er the faces of those who hear,  
Like a breeze that striketh ripples  
On the darkened face of a mere,  
That the gay and valiaunt Launcelot  
Should speak of Death and Doom. . . .*

*But a wonder . . . passing strange . . . is  
wrought . . .  
And all men turn, nor think on anything save  
what they see  
On Galahad a light is shed . . .  
Blood-red its rays . . .  
He has risen and gazes upward . . .*

*Launcelot.*

What seest thou, Galahad my son ?



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Galahad.*

Before mine eyes I see, amid a glorious garden,  
A Castle, whence the sound of song  
Comes on the stillness. . . .

“When will they come? When will they  
come?”

Thus say the voices.

*The Knights in doubt turn round, and glances  
pass.*

*Scarce know they how it goes with Galahad.*

*Naught see they unaccustomed save his radiant  
brow.*

*Galahad.*

It is the Castle of the Holy Grail,  
Where all who walk are pure.

O Arthur, King, I pray thee hearken !

Let me win there and seek for strength and  
pardon !

*Arthur.*

What hast thou done, Sir Galahad, that thou a  
pardon seekest ?

*His voice is quiet, and with pity blent.*

*Galahad.*

'Tis not to shrive me of a sin,  
But that the spirit of the Grail

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

May fill a British Knight.  
All would I urge to hie them hence,  
That all may there be clean,  
And that in days to come  
Thy Kingdom come not unto doom, and black  
disaster.

Here we have the Table Round,  
The noblest realm, the truest Knights.  
But all the snares of Hell are set,  
And all the sins are beautiful,  
Lest we in Britain once again should live  
Like those who dwelt in the world's fair garden  
In the Dawn of life and love.

*Sad is the look in Arthur's eyes,  
And heaviness, not anger, in his voice.*

*Arthur.*

Go ! Leave your country, seek the Grail !  
Go ! Find on earth the faëry plains of Heaven !  
Bring, if ye may, the power of Light to  
Britain . . .

In all our days of strength we have sustained  
you.

Now the fires of Britain lower burn,  
So go . . . before ye feel the cold !  
Galahad, of sin thou speakest !  
If all were pure and stainless,  
Where were our proof of valour ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*He thinks of Merlin and that forest day,  
And the tree that fallen lay before their path . . .*

But Merlin left me in the days ago.  
One by one . . . the stars go out . . .  
Alone amid the Night to leave your King !

*Galahad.*

Again I see the vision glorious.  
Once again the Light from Heaven cometh !  
Blood-red the rays of light victorious !

*A ray of light through yonder casement stealing,  
On Galahad its purest rays are shed.  
Both on the Table Round and 'mong the Knights  
it shineth . . .  
Blood-red the rays of vision glorious . . .*

*Launcelot.*

What seest thou now, my son ?

*Galahad.*

In a far land a Castle lies,  
Where rules the King of the Holy Grail.  
His are the Halls of Adoration,  
And his the pathway of the secret stair.  
'Tis there that the Seen and the Unseen  
mingle !  
'Tis there to learn Life's secret that we turn !

*Arthur.*

What secret, Galahad ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Galahad.*

Why do we live ?  
Why love we ?  
What is Man ? And Why ?  
There is a glorious answer !  
In the Halls of Dream I'll plead !

*Launcelot.*

My son, we live and love  
As men with understanding.  
Else were we as the beasts !  
What mystery lies here ?

*Galahad.*

Life holdeth more !  
As surely as I vow this quest,  
Know I that the Castle of the Grail  
Doth hold the secret of the world,  
Which long has slept among the hills,  
Or slumbered on the bosom of the sea !  
But which within the ear of Man shall sound  
So soon as he in lowly quest shall seek it !

*Arthur.*

Thinkest thou, Sir Galahad,  
That Life is other than to live ?

*Galahad.*

Life holdeth more !  
The starry firmament, the sounding deeps,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The world, the men and women,  
Move toward an end we know not.  
Thou, O King, who never did a deed  
Without some purpose,  
Deemest not the mighty Hand is idle,  
Or that His Will has wandered from the world ?

*Arthur*

Turn not thine eyes on high.  
Let each man of his deeds be careful, Galahad.

*Again the blood-red rays are seen;  
Upon the head of Galahad they shine.  
Blood-red the rays of vision glorious . . .  
The Light of the Grail on Galahad is set.  
He turns his face where floods the Light.*

*Galahad.*

There flows the Light.  
Again I see a Garden,  
Where stands the Castle of the Grail,  
Where rests the Holy Spear,  
Where on an altar is the Cup,  
That Joseph, Knight of Arimath, brought  
Even unto Glaston,  
Crystal arc of the blood-red ray.

*Arthur.*

Bedivere, what sayest thou ?  
Are these fond dreams,  
Or lie there in these relics help or hope ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Bedivere.*

I seem to see on Galahad's face  
A light that is not earthly :  
As though some bond there were  
Between this world and Light's own Kingdom.

*With solemn searching gaze*

*The Knights to Galahad have hearkened.*

*Dagonet, half-humorous, and Dinadan . . . in  
blank amazement . . .*

*Mordred, brooding to himself, his lip now curling,*

*As he thinks of Morgan,*

*And the web of green and gold.*

*The King turns now to Bedivere,*

*Who in a reverie sits,*

*Thinking upon his youth and boyhood's dreams . . .*

*Arthur.*

But of these relics ?

*A smile lights Mordred's face.*

*Bedivere.*

Once Merlin said to me :

"Some day the bounds 'twixt Seen and Unseen  
sever,

And we shall know what life in fullness means."

If Galahad win his way

To the Castle of the Holy Grail,

He may learn from the Grail King there

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The way of a world more fair,  
More free than the world of men.

*Arthur.*

What is better than our Britain ?  
In the days to come our power broader,  
The cloak of freedom o'er her foes shall fall !

*The Light no longer shines,  
And shadows have fallen.*

*Sir Kay draws near the fire, and with his foot the  
embers stirs.*

*Dagonet.*

O King, a man was sick : no vigour gat he  
from his meat.

Then said his friends, " His strength doth ebb.  
Ply him with all manner of meat and drink ! "

But the physician said :—

" Strain not his belly though he be a Briton.

'Tis rather his humour and his spirit that are  
sick ! "

*Some smile at Dagonet's saying, but the King  
frowns.*

*Arthur.*

How say'st thou, Mordred ?

*The King's face is hard,  
Though his brow bends not.  
Mordred looks down.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Mordred.*

Naught have I to say, O King.

*Arthur.*

My friends, sit you at the Table.

*Shortly they find them seats,  
And Arthur in his place doth stand.*

Sitting at the old Round Table,  
Made at Cameliard, desired by Merlin,  
It is for us to deem if it were well  
To leave this beating heart of timber,  
Round which flows the best of British blood,  
And follow Galahad to unknown lands.  
I found you but a clan among the clans,  
And now a nation greet you.  
Go, if we will! I would not hold you . . .

*Gawaine.*

O King, meseems thy kin should by thee  
stand.  
Thy nephew and thy Knight am I.  
Yet were it not to thine own honour  
That in thy day great deeds were done?  
I vow this Quest,  
And if no duty draw me thence  
Will seek the Castle of the Grail.



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Arthur.*

Gawaine, great sorrow holds me . . .  
And thou, O Launcelot, long'st to go ?

### *Launcelot.*

To shrive me of my sins, O King,  
And thus to serve thee.  
These peaceful days are long,  
And fleshly cords around our manhood strain.

### *Galahad.*

Go to the Garden of the Grail,  
Where all is pure and true and fair.  
Narrow the noble path on earth :  
In Heaven the holy path is broad.  
On earth the holy man and maid,  
Tread lonely paths of fast and prayer.  
But in the Halls of faithful dream,  
I hear the strains of nuptial feast,  
Where all the senses clean of sin,  
In golden days of free desire,  
Rise above the earthly plains  
Of fierce delight or sourest fast.  
The all in all that Life may be :  
Unseen and Seen, Evil and Good,  
Together blending,  
Life unending,  
Human sorrow in that morrow  
Ever ended.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

We will not wait till Death the Veil has lifted,  
But seek our Heaven To-day!  
With the glowing Grail to guide us  
We'll bring the Light to Britain.

*Again the Light is shed . . .*

*The vision glorious . . .*

*The Light victorious !*

*Blood-red its rays upon the Knights . . .*

*They rise and draw their swords,*

*The flashing blades in blood-red vision blended . . .*

*Arthur.*

This Quest I pray thee bless, O God of Battles,  
If now the ways of Peace unfold,  
And the sword is sheathed, in Merlin's sooth !  
Wise is the scabbard in the days of peace.  
In wisdom live we, but in strife we die.

*Sir Launcelot holds his sword within its scabbard,  
So that the hilt a jewelled Cross is seen.*

*Thus raises he his sword aloft, nor draws the  
blade.*

*Launcelot.*

I vow this Quest that to the end  
I serve the King and Queen !

*Then rises Guenever, the Queen,  
The King 'twixt her and Launcelot standing . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Guenever.*

Arthur, wilt thou not fare ?

I will go with thee through the wilds !

*" We will go with them ! " cry the ladies.*

*" With the Knights we go ! " " Hard were the journey . . . "*

*" We will go with them . . . " " Rough our beds."*

*" Together go we ! " are their cries.*

*Galahad.*

Nay ! with single hearts we journey !

When ye have seen the glory,

Come back to love and joyaunce,

To golden loves where all before were dross !

I vow this Quest that the Grail Light come

To this our realm as once in Eastern lands

The hailed Redemption came.

Our earth-born works are but of clay,

But the kindling fire shall come,

From the Halls of faithful dream !

*All hail the Holy Grail ! The Quest is vowed !*

*Hail to the King ! Glory to the Light victorious !*

*The kindling fire of God ! A Light is come to Britain !*

## ACT III

### PRELUDE

*In a far land a Castle lies,  
Where rules the King of the Holy Grail . . .  
Not his the kingdom of the world,  
Nor his the Land that lies beyond . . .  
But his the Halls of Adoration,  
And his the pathway of the secret stair,  
That leads from earth to heaven.  
In the Halls of the Grail the praises ring,  
Where stainless men and maidens sing  
The praise of Man's Redeemer.  
'Fore royal Altars ever burn  
The sacred lamps of prayer . . .  
Throughout the night and through the day  
Unending watch is ever kept,  
And sentinels of prayer that never slept  
A vigil keep.  
Since first the Cup and Spear were come  
To the Grail Knights' faithful care.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*A faithful Knight of Arimath, one Joseph,  
The sacred Body begged to bury . . .  
After he in lordly tomb had set the Flesh so foully  
slain,  
He to the desert came, and those to him most dear.  
With Bread and Wine they pledged both Memory  
and Hope.  
The Cup wherefrom they drank,  
And the Spear whereby the Lord was wounded,  
When on the Cross He suffered,  
Came to the Castle of the Grail.  
And there a Light from Heaven shineth daily,  
Blood-red the rays of vision glorious . . .  
Yea, the Castle of the Grail  
Holds the secret of the world,  
Which long has slept among the hills,  
Or slumbered on the bosom of the sea . . .  
In a far land lies the Castle of the Grail,  
Amid the forest free.  
From the world of men 'tis far away,  
But the questing soul may reach the goal,  
Amid the forest free . . .  
'Tis the fairest land of God,  
The land of the glowing Grail.  
They who would seek the Grail  
Through a forest go.  
So come they to a hut where dwells a hermit.*

*By the forest pathway lives he,  
The hut half-hidden mid the trees.  
As we watch, the hermit before his doorway  
stands . . .*

*Him seems he heareth footsteps  
Along the pathway coming,  
Slowly come the footfalls,  
Though a fair light breeze blows,  
And the birds and sunlight  
Make the heart beat high.  
Forth from the forest steps Gawaine,  
Stained with travel,  
Worn by the way.*

*Gawaine.*

*Come I near the Castle of the Grail ?*

*Nacien.*

*Yea ! but two days' faring from thee.*

*Then draws Gawaine anigh.*

*The hermit looks upon him kindly,  
As he before him stands.*

*His arms he stretches wearily,  
And Nacien, with a nod,*

*Bids him sit down on a rude bench beside them.  
Gawaine sits down, but Nacien stands.*

*Gawaine.*

*The Lord be praised it lies no further,  
For I am very weary.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Last night I dreamed I saw a well of water,  
And strove to drink . . .  
But ever fell the water from me,  
So hath the Quest for ever from me fallen.

*Nacien.*

So thou art for the Grail, Sir Knight ?  
How may I know thee ?

*Gawaine.*

Gawaine am I! And thou ?  
How art thou hight, good hermit ?

*Nacien.*

My name is Nacien.

*Gawaine.*

Lovest thou thy life ?

*Nacien.*

Yea, 'tis good and clean, in the forest free !

*Gawaine.*

In our world we lack good men.  
Why cam'st thou here ?  
I see thou art no weakling !

*Nacien laughs, bending his arms,  
So that he feels the joy of knotted muscles,  
And lusty strain of sinews.  
Gawaine laughs too, but wearily . . .*

*Nacien.*

In the world, the power and glory,  
The gold and purple,  
Confound the soul.  
Yea, even love,  
No more the human mating,  
Is like a drug become,  
To which the worldlings take,  
As drunkards turn to wine.

*Gawaine.*

Is not love as ever 'twas ?

*Nacien.*

Look at the world, at Arthur's Court.  
Long was I at the Court of Uther !  
Canst thou, Gawaine, image within thine  
heart  
That every man and woman doffed all useless  
raiment,  
And in the forest lived like me ?  
The life so simple that it standeth thus :—  
The daily bread, and daily labour light,  
The healthy peace of this green forest.  
The hut is warm in winter !

*Gawaine.*

Thou hast no home, O hermit . . .



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Nacien sighs, and gazes afar,  
As though some pain of long ago,  
Like an old wound, stings him afresh. . . .*

*Nacien.*

But if all men in fellow-serving lived,  
The men and women could be wedded,  
And homes be builded in the forest,  
The children's laughter mid the songs of birds  
be mingled.

*Gawaine.*

Why flee the world ?  
Live thou thy life therein !

*Nacien.*

I could not, nor again will try,  
Till all be gone save Love and Labour,  
The simple everlasting things ye heed not.

*Gawaine.*

What are thy laws, O hermit ?

*Nacien.*

Say to thy soul and body,  
"Is it meet ?"  
If both are like in mind,  
Heed thou naught else.

*Gawaine.*

Well are thy words,

But I am weary. . . .  
Canst thou, O hermit, find me food,  
And lodge me overnight ?

*Nacien.*

Spare is my food,  
But thou may'st have thy fill.  
My roof e'en now doth shelter  
A Knight of Arthur's Court.

*Gawaine.*

How came he here ?

*Nacien.*

As thou, but he was wounded.  
All yesterday he lay within my hut,  
But at the hour of evensong  
Lamely he came without.  
And now the shadows lengthen . . .  
Maybe he cometh yet again . . .  
Fain is Sir Launcelot of the fading day  
When he may muse awhile.

*Gawaine.*

Sir Launcelot !  
'Tis for him I bear a message.  
Here would I wait . . .  
Meanwhile, good hermit, tell me of the Grail !

*Nacien.*

Knowest thou not thy goal, Gawaine ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Gawaine.*

The Holy Grail !  
No more I know :  
Nor where it lieth,  
What power it hath,  
Save that Sir Galahad feareth Arthur's fall  
Unless the Grail shall aid him.

*Nacien.*

The Kingdoms of the world shall die  
Unless they send ambassadours to Heaven.  
In this land a castle lieth,  
Where dwell the Knights of the Holy Grail.  
They hold the Holy Spear,  
With which the Lord of Life was wounded.  
And the Cup is there,  
With which the Lord and his true men  
In Wine did pledge both Memory and Hope.  
Away from the world they dwell  
In a stronghold of Faith and prayer.  
They pray for the toiling thousands,  
And the world of wanderers.  
Daily they behold a wonder,  
The quick'ning rays of heavenly light . . .

*Blood-red the rays of vision glorious,  
Quick'ning the life that knows not sin.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Thrice daily pray they for the world.  
And for their simple needs,  
They till the soil, and grow the fruits of God.

*Gawaine.*

Are there no women there ?  
Is fatherhood a sin ?

*Nacien.*

Nay, lad !  
Some of them live hallowed lives of love,  
With wondrous ladies : by the Grail in marriage  
bound.  
True to their natures do they live,  
According to their hearts' own call,  
In cell or nuptial chamber.

*Gawaine.*

And thou ?

*Nacien.*

In the land of the glowing Grail I live,  
Far from the world of men.  
Hard by the Grail King's Castle  
Is my hut in the forest free.  
I have learned the lore of men :  
The beasts of the earth I know.  
I ken the stars and the floating spheres,  
And read the ways of men.  
This word to you I say !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

The world in wondrous wise was wrought,  
And blessed was He, who made it.  
I believe in the Lord who was slain by man,  
Who is worshipped in the Castle of the Grail.  
I believe in Man and Woman,  
And the fruit of marriage.  
Sacred is joy and laughter,  
And the fruit and wine of the world.

*Gawaine.*

What of the darker ways of men ?

*Nacien.*

They are but shadows on the face of Time !

*Nacien makes a sign, and toward the forest turn  
they.*

*Slowly they wend between the boles of trees. . . .*

*Within the hut a sound is heard . . .*

*From his couch uprisen*

*To the door Sir Launcelot comes . . .*

*Pain, the first child of human passion,*

*Has struck the face and mien of Launcelot.*

*Pale with his wounds and lame withal,*

*He staggers, straggling forward . . .*

*This is the Knight whom bards do sing,*

*Who bringeth honour to the King.*

*This is the bold Sir Launcelot,*

*With the heart and the face of flame.*

*Gawaine and Nacien are gone....  
Sir Launcelot kneels toward Lyonesse,  
Where dwell his King and kindred,  
And his lady. . . .*

*Launcelot.*

In a far land I wander,  
Where dwell the Knights of the Holy Grail.  
I would forget thee, Guenever !  
I pray to the Lord of Life  
To have me for his vassal,  
And to the Queen of Heaven,  
That she at His right hand may pray for me.  
But within me burns a fire  
That death alone can quench !  
O Guenever, in farthest Lyonesse,  
To me more holy than this glade,  
With thy pure prayers thy vassal bless . . .  
I would not love thee had I power  
To keep the chambers of my heart  
As pure as thine.  
O lovely sunset, die away . . .  
O new-born sun, arise at Dawn . . .  
And let my sorrowful passion fade,  
In morning light to leave me free . . .  
That I may seek the Grail,  
Like Galahad, my son . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*From his knees he rises,  
And to the forest looks . . .  
Himseems he heareth footsteps . . .  
A moment Launcelot listens . . .  
Then comes Gawaine. . . .*

*Gawaine.*

Sir Launcelot !

*Launcelot.*

Gawaine, with joy I greet thee !

*Gawaine.*

What dost thou here ?

*Launcelot.*

I seek the Grail. . . .

*Gawaine.*

Thy face toward Lyonesse was set !

*Launcelot.*

Toward Lyonesse I turned,  
For there the setting sun did lower,  
And glowed with memories. . . .

*Gawaine.*

That thou seekest lies at Camelot. . . .

*Launcelot.*

Thou dost taunt me ?

*Gawaine.*

Nay ! For I bring a message.

“Go ! seek him through the world, and say :—

“ ‘My blessing take where’er thou wanderest ! ’ ”

*Launcelot.*

Thus spake the Queen ?

*Gawaine.*

Yea.

*Launcelot.*

Dost thou, too, seek the Grail ?

*Gawaine.*

A Knight of Guenever am I.

Now that I’ve found thee

Thine answer would I carry.

*Launcelot.*

Say that I seek the Grail !

*On his face the sunset glows,*

*As at Camelot the rays on Galahad were shed.*

Say *not* that I am wounded.

*Ruby glows the light . . .*

*The colour of sunset and of sorrow.*

Say *not* that my heart is scarred,

My soul than my wounds more sore !

Say that with lusty beasts I’ve battled.



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*He turns his head,  
And in shadow seems to see  
The forest foes with whom he strove.*

Say *not* that my passions were more fierce than  
they !

*His face is hard with pain and striving,  
But at the thought of Guenever it clears.  
Again he turns toward Lyonesse . . .  
The falling sun rays full upon him.  
His hand toward the Castle of the Grail is held.*

Say that the way lies clear. . . .  
But two days faring from me !  
*Then Launcelot looks away from Lyonesse.  
Toward the Castle of the Grail he steps,  
And standeth firm and strong.*

Say that my back to Lyonesse is set,  
And I go toward the glowing Grail !  
*Toward the Castle of the Grail he goeth.*

## ACT IV

### PRELUDE

*In broken slumber  
Lies the dull and dreaming world.  
The Seven Senses mid Mankind are striving,  
And all in turmoil tumbles,  
Or in swoon is sleeping.  
Deep in the shadow of forgotten things  
Lies the Lake of Wonder.  
A Sword from out the Lake arose,  
But there came the Holy Spear.  
The Sword shall to the Lake go back,  
And the Holy Spear shall rule.  
The Seven Senses and the Seven Sins . . .  
The Sense whereby man sees,  
And that whereby holy and unholy things he  
    heareth . . .  
The Sense of Touch, of Smell,  
And Taste, which snare the body . . .  
These have the beasts, but two there are,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Which Man alone in fullness hath . . .  
Desire, wherein the form of woman shines,  
A glory of the soul and body !  
Whereby the best in human form is worshipped,  
By the waiting soul within him.  
And Adoration, where Desire outsoars herself,  
Seeking in God what Man and Woman lack,  
O sing the joy of life, ye Seven Senses !  
Let all the chords of earthly music strike,  
And let the sound of Adoration  
With all desires and passions mingle,  
Till on the soul the heavenly music break !  
But where the lesser senses rear themselves,  
The great ones starve . . .  
There lieth Sin !  
In a far land a Castle lies,  
Where dwell the Knights of the Holy Grail.  
There are the Halls of Adoration,  
There the home of free desire,  
Where all the Senses pure of Sin,  
Live golden days, our life outsoaring !  
Let the great vision come before us,  
The Halls of the glowing Grail !  
Let the sound of Adoration,  
With all desires and passions mingle,  
Till on the soul the heavenly music break !*

*A Cloister in the Castle of the Grail . . .  
And through the rounded arch before us . . .  
The Hall of Adoration !  
Where the daily wonder cometh !  
In blood-red rays of vision glorious,  
The Light of the World victorious  
Comes down to the world of men.  
  
Beside the doorway lies a couch,  
Where lies a pale and tranced man.  
By the couch an old physician stands,  
And at his side a noble, aged man . . .  
Clad as Priest, and crowned as King . . .  
The Grail King standeth there !*

*Grail King.*

*In deepest swoon he lies,  
Like the dull and dreaming world.  
He seemeth dead in sooth . . .  
The Seven Senses there  
Have sinned the Seven Sins.*

*Within the Hall of the Grail is heard,  
The chaunting of young men . . .  
Cloistral the sound,  
As though some spirit sang,  
Yet full of faith,  
And with the voice of men.  
Rising and falling thus,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*As they plead a life to save,  
That he might turn to God.*

*Young Men.*

Raise him to life once more,  
Who in sin did seek the Grail.  
For he did turn to Thee,  
Knowing not that sin is frail.

Born of the flesh is Man,  
In the realms of earth he roves,  
And from unhallowed glades  
Wandered he mid sacred groves.

Then through the gateway came,  
Where the lions on guard are chained,  
And to the Holy Place,  
Way had he almost gained.

Dead now he lies to sin.  
Let no man unshriven die.  
Raise Thou this man, O King !  
Waken thou the world, we cry !

*The sound of voices dies away . . .  
Within the Chapel of the Grail is silence,  
While they pray for the tranced soul . . .  
The prayer of faith*

*Like incense rises.*

*From earth to heaven  
Prayer goes upward.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Ever higher wafts the fragrance.*

*Sweet in Heaven, the faithful prayer.*

*Grail King.*

Is their prayer heard, physician,  
Or has he passed ?

*Physician.*

Though slow the heart,  
It beateth still.

*Grail King.*

Is he doomed to suffer weary days,  
And walk the world in sorrow ?

*Physician.*

If he awaketh it is well . . .  
Meseemeth, Holy King,  
This Knight hath lived after the flesh.  
Then happening upon a holy vision,  
His frightened soul nigh brake his body.

*Grail King.*

Yea, when yestern he came at evensong,  
And to this door did win his way,  
As I with holy rites did raise the Cup,  
A sudden blinding light was shed.  
When we came forth there lay this Knight.  
Too pure the rays for one whose eyes had looked  
on sin.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Yet noble must he be . . .  
To rise from sin to seek the Grail.

*Physician.*

Thus is it alway . . .  
From couch of sin, to bed of sickness.

*Grail King.*

Then sent I for thine aid,  
And they did lift him here,  
That near the Sacred Hall  
His wounded soul might heal.

*Physician.*

Naught can I do to save him,  
For it is plain the shaft of light  
From heaven was sent to pierce him.

*Grail King.*

Glory to Him on High,  
That pain and sorrow purge us !

*Physician.*

Yea, Holy King,  
All natural things are good . . .  
To live our life in joy,  
To sorrow and to love,  
For deed and dream to strive,  
And at last to die. . . .

*Grail King.*

Yet the world of men has wandered.  
Power has passed before his eyes . . .  
The lust of land, the dust of gold,  
And all the garish glitter hold him !

*Deep are his tones, but a peace is his,  
Far from the thoughts of men.  
Within the Castle broods a joyful calm,  
While in the Chapel do they dwell well in silent  
prayer.*

But in this Castle are we strong of spirit.  
We leave all power in the Hand of Him,  
Who made the land and folded it with ocean . . .  
The gold and purple to array his altar.  
And from the land He gives us fruit . . .  
Hark, friend, while now the choral prayer  
Goes up for the world of men.

*In solemn roll of voices rise the strains of choral  
prayer.*

*Young Men.*

We pray for the world of wanderers,  
For Man and his warring tribes,  
Who seek for joy where sorrow lies,  
And power where lurketh pain.



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

We pray for the world of wanderers,  
And the restless human sea,  
Whose waves are the troubled souls of men,  
Whose moans are the dreams that may not be.

We pray for the world of wanderers,  
That all men may seek the Grail,  
And find their joy upon the earth,  
Their power in Love and Faith.

*Faintly upon the air a trumpet sound !*

*The Grail King hearkens . . .*

*Louder the sound of the trumpet is heard !!*

*And with it the roar of fretful lions,*

*At the gateway struggling from their chains to  
break.*

*A guard along the corridor is coming. . . .*

*Grail King.*

Hark ! the trumpet at the gate sounds forth  
again !

Methought I heard it break upon the prayer . . .

Guard, bring me word who cometh.

*Adown the sacred stair goeth the guard,*

*While the Grail King awaiteth the guest.*

*The old physician holds the pulse of Launcelot,*

*Who lies as still as in the tomb.*

*White is his face as though his beauty,*

*By fire had been tried,*

*And all his earthly pride become as ashes,  
Leaving but a silver flame behind.  
Narrow the sacred path on earth,  
Feeble the flame of earth-born life.  
His quest has failed . . .  
But surely doth the Castle of the Grail  
Harbour the secret of the world,  
Which long has slept among the hills,  
Or slumbered on the bosom of the sea.  
There comes again the guard. . . .*

*Guard.*

Sir Galahad is here !

*He hath come to the Castle of the Grail !  
He treads the pathway of the sacred stair,  
And in his clear-browed beauty stands,  
Glorious in his armour and his manhood.  
In his youth to the King he cometh,  
And kneels before him. . . .*

*Grail King.*

Art thou Sir Galahad,  
Whose perfect manhood shall win thy quest ?

*Galahad.*

Holy King, I am Galahad.  
I have kept the Faith,  
But perfect shall no man be called.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

### *Grail King.*

Thou sayest well . . .  
For here there lieth one,  
Who hither fared but now is fallen  
Beneath the searching light of Heaven.

*Rising from his knees,  
Galahad draws near,  
That he the Knight may name . . .  
And he seeth his father fallen,  
Clouded the glorious name.  
In Bretagne or in Britain stood  
Launcelot the noblest Knight,  
But the soul of Launcelot's stricken  
Beneath the clear Grail Light.  
And sad is the heart of Galahad . . .  
Again he sinks in prayer.*

### *Galahad.*

Thou that sittest on the Throne,  
Thou Who didst suffer for Mankind,  
Hear this our prayer for him who lieth there !  
Stricken past human aid . . .  
The soul but feebly clinging . . .  
Bid him awake, I pray !  
*In slumber lies the dull and dreaming world,  
The Seven Senses mid mankind are striving,  
And all is turmoil. . . .*

Not him alone, but bid the world awake !  
 Like Launcelot, my father, thus it lies.  
 I pray not for forgiveness of his sins :  
 Who are we who sin not ?  
 But in a sleep we lie.  
 We have not heard the voice of God.  
 We have not dreamed again of Eden,  
 To live anew as Thou wouldst have us dwell.  
 I pray Thee waken him to life !  
 Not as men live now,  
 But every sense a servant.  
 Waken the world, I pray,  
 And let my father, Launcelot, give the sign !

*Silent they kneel in prayer . . .*

*The prayer of faith,*

*Like incense rises.*

*Ever higher,*

*Wafts the fragrance.*

*Sweet in Heaven,*

*The faithful prayer.*

*At the couch kneels the physician . . .*

*Faithful, he watches for the sign . . .*

*Physician.*

Ah !

*Grail King.*

Moved he not ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Physician.*

Aye ! he moves his arm . . .

His eyes are opening.

*The form of Launcelot moves . . .*

*He sighs . . .*

*His limbs . . . slowly . . . he stretches . . .*

*Grail King.*

He wakes . . .

Like the dead from the tomb,

At the vesper hour he rises

From the evil swoon of earth !

Wake, O Launcelot ! Wake, O world !

*Launcelot.*

Where am I ?

*Grail King.*

In the Castle of the Holy Grail,

Where rest the Cup and the Spear.

*Launcelot.*

Wherefore am I come ?

*Grail King.*

Come from a world of woe,

Where evil worsteth good,

To the home of the Holy Grail,

Where prayer forever goeth

To the Highest of the High !

Where by a daily wonder,  
To the world new comfort cometh.  
Daily we have a pledge  
That Man for Man was slain !  
That the Power behind the Veil,  
Is true to a world redeemed !

*Launcelot.*

Have I not lost her ?

*Grail King.*

Most like thou hast,  
If thou hast lived with sinners, paramours.  
But thou hast gained the threshold of the Grail !

*Launcelot.*

The Grail ? My thoughts come back to me . . .  
Galahad ! My son, Galahad . . . he too is  
wandering . . .

*Galahad.*

My father, I am here !

*Launcelot.*

Art thou Galahad ? Or do I dream ?

*Galahad.*

Yea, now thank we God,  
That thou art raised from swoon.

*The Grail King through the arch-way goes . . .  
Within the Hall of Adoration stands he.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*No more they see him, but they know he to the  
Altar goeth.*

*It is the vesper hour,  
And all the Grail Knights there are gathered.  
The voice of the King is heard.*

*Grail King.*

*Before ye chaunt the Holy Offices,  
Again raise ye the strain of prayer  
For those who dwelt in sin, yet sought the  
Grail !*

*Young Men.*

*Raise him to life once more,  
Who in sin did seek the Grail.  
For he did turn to Thee,  
Knowing not that sin is frail.*

*Dead now he lies to sin,  
Let no man unshriven die.  
Raise Thou this man, O King !  
Waken Thou the world, we cry !*

*The pale and sin-struck man  
Fresh vigour seems to gain.  
And as the voices die away,  
He rises on his couch,  
Turning to Galahad.*

*Launcelot.*

Thou art my son !  
I pray thee, do what I have failed to do.  
All that I might have been, be thou !  
I, who have failed, do bid thee stand  
Within that sacred arch-way,  
As I did stand !

*Then Galahad draws near his father,  
Who with a sign bids him toward the arch-way.*

*Launcelot.*

Gaze thou with faith upon the Altar !  
Lift thine eyes unto the Son of Man !  
It shall be well with thee !  
It shall be well !

*He sinks again, and Galahad steps forward,  
Standing within the portal . . .  
Swiftly it comes !  
Blood-red the rays of vision glorious,  
Upon the face of Galahad is shed.  
Within the Hall, the Grail King's voice is heard.*

*Grail King.*

Galahad ! Chosen One !  
We wait for thee with welcome.  
*With a last look at Launcelot, his father,  
Galahad goes 'fore the Altar of the Grail.  
Launcelot rises on his couch,*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

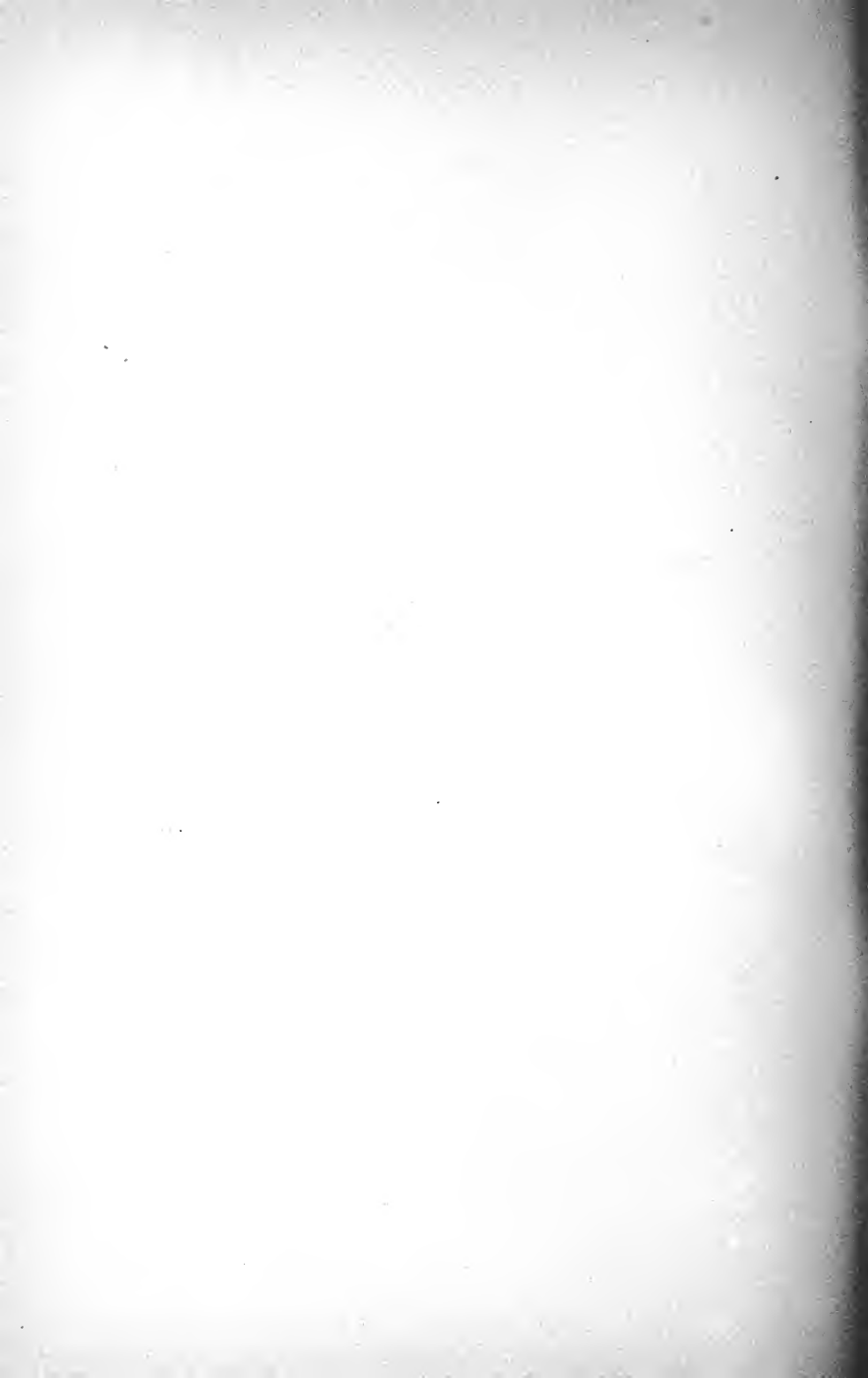
*But the physician, watching near,  
Stays him with gentle hand.*

*Physician.*

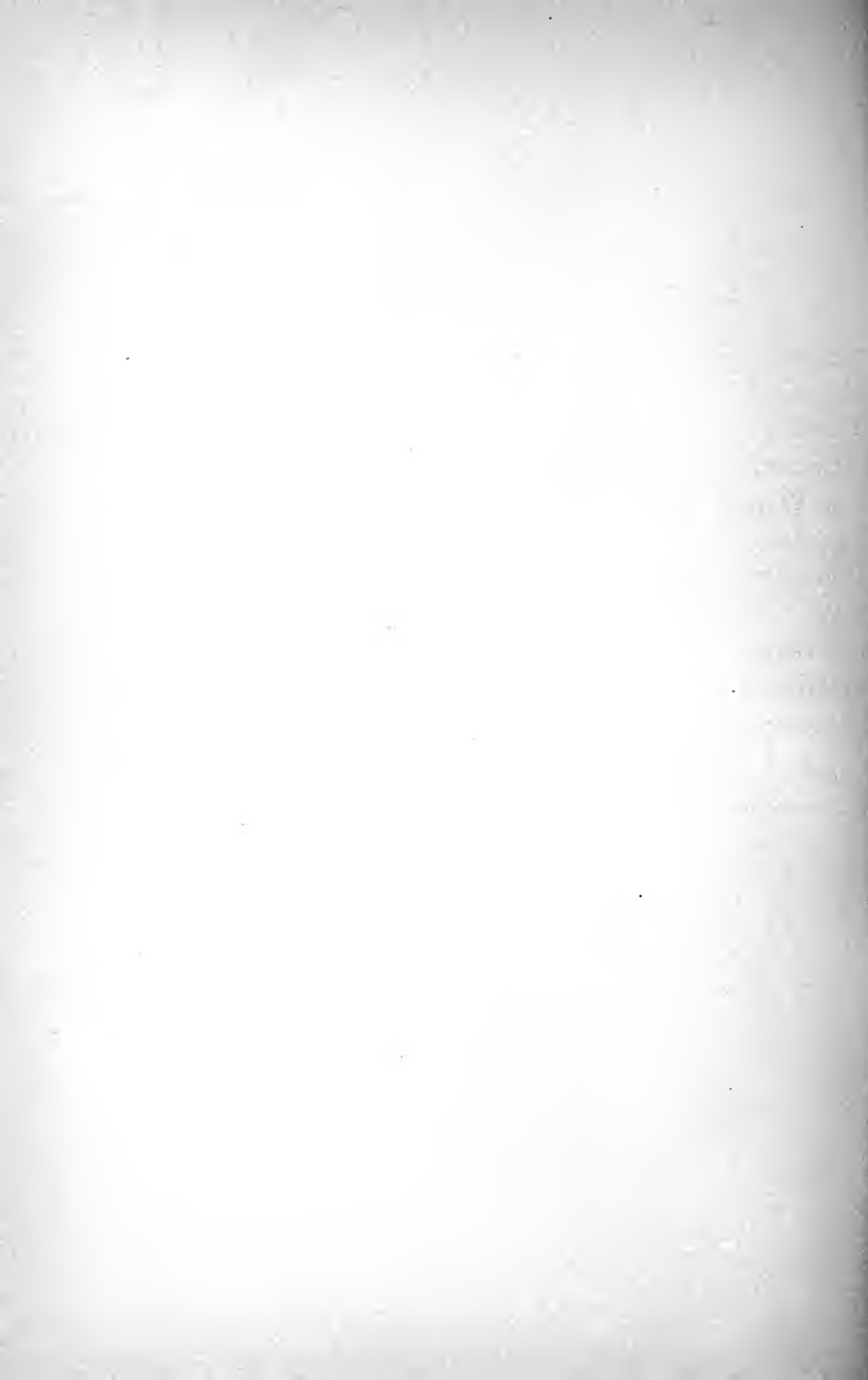
Sir Launcelot, all that we have left undone,  
Can by our children oft be better wrought.  
The message of the Grail is Hope!

*Then Launcelot from his couch of suffering  
rises . . .*

*By the power of the Grail he standeth healed !  
At the vesper hour he rises,  
As the dull and dreaming world shall rise,  
When the days of the Grail are come,  
And ripe is the fruit of Dream.*



THE DEATH OF ARTHUR



## CHARACTERS

ARTHUR

MORDRED

BEDIVERE

GAWAINE, and, later, THE WRAITH OF GAWAINE

THE WRAITH OF MERLIN amid the Storm Clouds

LAUNCELOT

DAGONET

KAY

A HERALD

MORGAN LE FAY

GUENEVER

A Woman, three Churls, and a Squire, and people of the household.

ACT I	-	-	The Hall of Arthur
ACT II	-	-	The Chamber of Morgan le Fay
ACT III	-	-	The Field of Camalan by Night

(The scene first shows Arthur's Camp, but a storm coming up gives a vision of Merlin's Wraith amid the clouds, and, on clearing, reveals Mordred's army around the watch fires.)

PART IV  
THE DEATH OF ARTHUR  
ACT I

PRELUDE

*The flower of Life is Death . . .  
From ripe destruction falls  
The seed whence springs the future.  
Our land in riper years  
Shall be the garden of all earthly glory,  
And Love shall grow her harvest,  
The only sorrow . . . Death.  
E'en then beneath the sickle of the Autumn  
Reaper  
Shall rise again the life of Spring.  
But over Arthur's Court the Reaper stands.  
Noble sheaves shall to his sickle fall.  
Death . . . Death . . . and Doom . . .  
And the woe that's woven.  
Fate will a wonder weave,  
A wonder big with doom,  
And a shroud o'er Britain spread*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*From the warp and woof of her loom.  
In a far land a castle lies  
Where rules the King of the Holy Grail.  
Throughout the day, and through the night  
Unending watch is ever kept . . .  
And sentinels of prayer  
A vigil keep that never slept  
Since first the Spear and Cup were come  
To the Grail Knights' faithful care.  
Deep in the shadow of forgotten things,  
Rising like mountains round it, is a Lake.  
Deep are its shadows and its silences, but white  
the foam of its black waters,  
When the breathless oars of ghostly rowers break  
its surface calm.  
O Lake of Wonder, roll thy mists away.  
Of Igraine the fairy Queen of Cornwall was he  
born,  
And Uther was his father . . .  
How shall he die?  
The Fates ordained, as from the fateful hour it  
was written,  
A mighty warrior should desire a Queen.  
His soul with purple wings of passion beat  
Around the altar of a waiting heart,  
And Merlin ruled them with the Wizard Stone.  
O'er the sea shone a star,*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*All hail, white star ! O royal herald, hail !  
And to the Castle of the Grail they came,  
Where ruled the Cup and Spear.  
The Sword from the Lake did come,  
But it returneth to the Water,  
And the Cup and the Spear shall rule.  
From his own loins did he beget destruction,  
A beautiful harvest of Death in Mordred's shape.  
When sunset in the skies shall flare,  
And Doom upon the Kingdom steal,  
The King shall die, but he shall come again !  
Begotten of immortal pain,  
The song of many an aching harp  
Shall hail his second reign.  
There are two gates to the world's garden,  
The one is Birth, the other Death is hight.  
All that from storm and travail springs  
In restless stream shall flow,  
And in the ebb shall pass with sobs and sighs.  
Burn ! Burn, ye flames of Love, unruly torches !  
Let man and woman throb with free desire.  
In a far land a Castle lies  
Where dwell the Knights of the Holy Grail,  
Who pray for the ways of men,  
And the world of wanderers.  
The time shall come,  
When all the senses clean from sin,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*In golden days of pure desire,  
Shall find their destiny.*

. . . . .

*A fragrant morn,  
The sunlight filling Arthur's Hall,  
Which now is empty, but without the door  
Two forms are waiting . . .  
Queen Guenever a robe of green is wearing,  
Of such a shade as forest leaves in summer . . .  
With her a tall Knight walketh,  
Clad in a cloak of flame.  
They enter the Hall of Arthur,  
Of the Table and the Song.  
Launcelot and Guenever, walking side by side . . .  
'Tis an early Autumn morning,  
The time of ripened corn . . . and falling  
leaves. . . .*

*Guenever.*

Hast thou not gone to greet them ?

*Launcelot.*

The Knights returning ? No !  
Enough of these sad mysteries . . .  
Let us live !

*Then look they towards each other . . .  
The longing of Launcelot's heart*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Like to the parched ground in summer, yearning  
for rain.*

*Very far the land where Launcelot went to shrive  
his soul !*

*Guenever is calm . . .*

*And very fair to see.*

*It is the time of ripened corn, and falling leaves . . .*

*Ripe love, and falling leaves of doom. . . .*

*Guenever.*

Let us love, thou sayest, Launcelot ?

*Launcelot.*

The King . . . The Grail . . . alike cry "Serve  
and suffer !"

While flesh and blood are tingling with life and  
love !

*Guenever.*

But I am Arthur's wife. . . .

*Launcelot.*

Alas ! but truly have I served him . . .

Must I yield love as well as service ? . . .

Doth he love thee, O Guenever, as I ?

*Guenever.*

Yea, he is true !

Alas ! no fault lies with him. . . .

*Launcelot.*

Mordred . . .

*Guenever.*

Yea ! But he did tell me, in the days ago . . .  
Full freely I forgave.

And now thou seekest that same sin, O  
Launcelot.

He loves me well,  
But the kingdom is his heart's great care.

*Launcelot.*

And I, whose name is not a little thing,  
Who have no lack of worship,  
Cast all aside for thee.

Henceforth my honour is to free thy name  
from slander :

To hold thee not as Queen, but as a bride for  
ever,

In Joyous Gard become more joyous because of  
thee !

*The sound of the horse hoofs, the clangour of  
arms !*

*The shouts of the men show the Knights have come  
home !*

*Guenever.*

The Grail Knights come . . .

*Launcelot.*

Like mine, their Quest has failed . . .

But my quest of Guenever ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Guenever.*

Yea, Guenever is thine . . . I fear . . . O  
Launcelot !

*Nearer the sound of the horse hoofs, the clangour  
of arms !*

*The shouting of men, and loud words of welcome !*

*Launcelot.*

Morgan le Fay is gone a journey.  
Her magic chamber of guests is empty.

When this slow sun is set,

There will we meet !

There plan our bridals and our flight

From Courts of Kings to Love's own castle,

My Joyous Gard, where safely will we dwell . . .

Till sunset, Guenever !

*Guenever.*

My love, I cannot !

*Launcelot.*

In the name of Love I bid thee.

*Guenever.*

In Arthur's name, I answer "NO !" !

*Launcelot.*

Arthur's name, which gives thee grief . . .

*Guenever.*

In our springtide it gave me gladness,

But here they come !  
Stand far away from me . . .

*Launcelot crosses the Hall . . .  
Turns on his heel,  
And boldly faces toward the doorway . . .  
Nearer the shouts and the clangour . . .  
He comes ! King Arthur comes ! !  
And in his train the Knights returning.  
They come not in joy or triumph.  
Not one has seen the Grail Light . . .  
And Galahad is not among them . . .  
They follow Arthur to the Table Round,  
And there they seat them.  
Some stragglers near the doorway linger,  
And with them several Eastern women . . .  
Some two or three of these the Knights have  
wedded.  
The King and Queen their proper places take,  
And Launcelot hath his place of honour . . .  
Mordred is there and all the well-known Knights,  
save . . . Galahad . . .*

*Arthur.*

I greet the Knights Returning !  
Though they bring no tidings big with hope,  
Yet Galahad hath seen the Grail Light !  
Either he within the Castle dwells

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

In daily prayer for this our Kingdom,  
Or before another King he stands,  
In distant lands beyond the Castle of the Grail !  
But ye in holy lands have wandered.  
I pray you stay beside me,  
While I stand as judge before the people,  
For haply in the Castle of the Grail,  
They look with clearer and with kinder eyes  
Upon the sins of man than we,  
Whose passions are as theirs that stand before  
us !

For 'tis my duty now to judge the people.  
If I be not merciful as Mercy's known  
In the Castle of the Holy Grail,  
Lift up your voices and I'll stay my hand !  
Herald ! Let those who plead come hither !

*The Herald to the doorway goeth.*

*Herald.*

The King in judgment sits ! Ho ! Ho !  
If any suffer wrong or heavy sorrow,  
Let him come to the Table Round !!

*All to the doorway turn . . .*

*The Herald standeth still and straight,  
Then turneth round.*

*Herald.*

My lord the King, they bring a churl !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Against him it is charged he will not work,  
Save when he listeth,  
Which is not oft !

*Arthur.*

Bring him before me . . .

*Two squires come in . . .*

*Walking between them a strong man . . .*

*Clad as for labour in the fields.*

*Arthur.*

Thou wilt not work ?

*Man.*

Sire, my master works not.

*King Arthur to a squire turneth.*

*Arthur.*

Where is the master ?

*Squire.*

He hath some service for Sir Bedivere.

*Bedivere.*

Sire, 'tis true !

*Arthur.*

Stay ! if he be not gone,

This churl goes free.

No man goes idle in my Kingdom !



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Bedivere.*

For him I give my word.  
He's ridden far for needful forestry.

*Arthur.*

I thank thee, Bedivere.  
Man, thy master works.  
Thou too shalt work !  
Give this man meat and drink when he hath  
laboured.  
Till then forbid him food !  
*The squires and the man go forth.*  
*The Herald at the doorway stands.*

*Herald.*

Sir Kay hath here a man,  
Who hath reaped the harvest of his fellow,  
At dead of night.  
And only now is it found out,  
Who did the deed.

*Arthur.*

Bring him before me !

*Sir Kay comes in . . . with him four squires . . .*  
*Two of them lead a churl, in cordage held,*  
*Who fiercely glowers on the fellowship.*

*Arthur.*

How is it proven ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Kay.*

He hath the corn in bins !

*Arthur.*

Dost thou nay-say it man ?

*The churl no word gainsayeth, but doth frown . . .*

*Arthur.*

The law is that he be beaten,

And to a dungeon cast,

There to dwell in darkness.

For I fear to hang him, as the law doth bid me !

Thus lighten I the doom !

*Bedivere.*

Methinketh the Grail gainsayeth such a doom.

“ AYE ! AYE ! ” *the Grail Knights say.*

*Then turneth Dagonet.*

*Dagonet.*

Sire, have I thine ear ?

*Arthur.*

Aye, Dagonet !

*Turns Dagonet unto the churl accusing.*

*Dagonet.*

He reaped thy crops by night ?

*Churl.*

Aye, aye, Sir Dagonet.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Dagonet.*

Reap his by day !

*Churl.*

He hath no harvest.

*Dagonet.*

How now ? Where is his holding ?

*Churl.*

His father had no field.

*Dagonet.*

Then all is well.

Thy father had better days than his.

Now hath this knave thy harvest.

This is the see and saw of Fortune !

*Then grins the guilty churl.*

*The warders smile, as do the Knights and men-  
at-arms,*

*And some few ladies in the gallery watching.*

*Arthur taps upon the Table with ill-favour.*

*Arthur.*

Sir Dagonet, is this thy judgment ?

*Dagonet.*

Nay, 'tis but my jest.

Were I a judge, both jape and justice would I  
give.

Were I King Dagonet of Britain,

Thus were my judgment :—  
Thou hast the corn in bins!  
Some has been bread, and in thy belly went,  
And hath outgone our judgment.  
But some in bins is laid.  
Thou shalt lose both corn and bins,  
And work for thine own living!  
And mind thou be not taken again!

*Arthur.*

Let it be done! Loose him!  
But make him carry back the corn,  
And yield the bins!

*The churl laughs, and when the thongs are taken  
from him*

*Doth homage to the King,  
And with his warder leaves the Hall.  
The Herald comes again.*

*Dagonet.*

Sire, I hold that here is justice!  
To punish maketh brutal  
Both him who beats and him who is belaboured.

*Herald.*

My lord the King!  
Behold a woman, whose sin  
By death is punished!

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Slowly a woman, young and beautiful,  
But coarsely clad, between two men-at-arms doth  
come.*

*Her face is sad but evil lurks not there,  
And pity lingers in the eyes of Arthur.*

*Arthur.*

This gives me sorrow,  
And, had I made the law,  
The doom were less.  
Canst thou not, woman, name the father  
Of this poor child, who, before his birth,  
Is doomed to death ?

*Woman.*

Nay, O king . . .

*Full of sorrow is the King . . .*

*Silent the woman weeps . . .*

*Arthur.*

Herald, has all been done  
To find the father ?  
And are they sure no wrong to her was done,  
And that of her free will she sinned ?

*Herald.*

Aye, sire, 'tis written here, upon the charge,  
Which 'fore the judge was proven !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Arthur.*

Then, in sorrow I give thee doom of death . . .  
And to the mercy of high Heaven bid thee !

*Mordred.*

The mercy of the fiends of Hell !!

“ SEIZE HIM ! ” . . . “ A SWORD ! ”

“ HE IS AGAINST THE KING ! ” . . . “ LONG  
LIVE MORDRED ! ”

“ LONG LIVE THE KING. ” *Thus cry the  
crowd . . .*

*The clamour and babble of voices  
Drown each other's tones.*

*Arthur.*

Be silent ! On my sword, be silent !!

*On Mordred turns he.*

Mordred, how darest thou to mock our judgment !!

*With pent-up wrath and ringing voice  
Young Mordred rises.*

*Mordred.*

Sire, thy justice, which dooms to death a  
woman,  
Mother of a child unborn,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Is twice a murderer !  
And he who calls for Heaven's mercy  
To bless so foul a murder,  
*He* is a mocker both of Heaven and of  
Justice !!

*A tumult rises up. Churls rush from outside.*

*The gallery is filled. A roaring mob is here !*

"LONG LIVE THE KING !" . . . "THE LAD IS  
RIGHT !"

"DOWN WITH THIS LAW !" . . . "SLAY THE  
ADULTERESS !" *Thus storm the voices.*

*The King is full of wrath . . .*

*The woman clings to Arthur's chair,*

*Kneeling to him for safeguard.*

"SHE'S TOO BEAUTIFUL !" . . . "'TIS MORDRED'S  
CHILD !" " 'TIS NOT !"

*A thousand cries, groans, cheers and shouts,  
Bedivere hath risen, and they give him hearing.*

*Bedivere.*

O King, we have sorrow

That all this tumult hath arisen.

But sire, the law is cruel. . . .

'Twas made lest lawless love should bring  
forth children,

Who, without guidance, growing up as out-  
laws

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Should fiercely live alone like lions,  
Or herd as wolves, and not in families.  
And thus the law to kill chance-gotten  
children !

Therefore, when the child is born,  
Give it to me, who have no child at home,  
And he shall be thy faithful servant ?

*Arthur.*

Aye, Bedivere !  
Know, all ye people, Arthur yields,  
Not to the sorry passions of Sir Mordred,  
But to the grace of good Sir Bedivere !

*The woman weeps.*

*Arthur.*

Why weepest thou ?

*Woman.*

He takes the child !

*The King smiles kindly . . .*

*Arthur.*

Aye, Bedivere, like men we saw not that !  
Wilt take them both ?

*Bedivere.*

Yea, both . . . if both will come !



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Arthur.*

Then is it well !

Herald, hast thou other cases ?

*Herald.*

O King, the tale is told !

*Arthur.*

Then go we forth through Camelot,  
Where would our people greet the Knights  
Returning.

*They rise to go . . .*

*But Launcelot laggeth,*

*And the Queen is slow to leave her chair.*

*Arthur.*

Launcelot, thou didst not ride with us  
To greet the Knights Returning !  
Wilt come with us through Camelot ?

*Launcelot.*

Thy word is law. I did await them here . . .

'Tis but a month since I returned alone . . .

*The Knights turn two by two and march away . . .*

*Forth they go,*

*And follow Britain's King.*

*By his side the Queen . . .*

*And the Knight whose praises ring,*

*Who too hath been*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Where the Grail Light shines afar.  
Save Galahad the brave,  
Whose heart was clean !  
Forth they go,  
And follow Britain's King,  
Save a laggard few,  
Looking after . . . as they pass them through  
the door . . .  
Gawaine is left . . . and Mordred . . .  
Some men-at-arms and kitcheners of Kay.*

*Mordred.*

Gawaine, is not the hour here ?

*Gawaine.*

Speakest thou of Launcelot, who saved thy life ?

*Mordred.*

That which he did, for prowess was it wrought !  
And shall I hide away the sin, because he  
served me ?

Did'st mark them when we came into the  
Hall . . .

How far apart they stood . . . who stood so  
very close before ?

*Gawaine.*

What thou dost not see, dare not to judge !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Mordred.*

Full little shall we see until . . .  
Launcelot and the lie of Launcelot  
Are like dry rot within the Table Round.  
And all the beauty of his Guenever, like  
Eastern witchery.

*Gawaine.*

Hast thou no pity, Mordred ?

*Mordred.*

Had Arthur pity when he doubly sinned ?  
When his unlawful and unnatural passion  
Begot a curse whom men call Mordred !  
Mordred, whose dreams are nobler than the  
King's,  
Who would see Britain free, each man a king !  
No crawler after quests, and sainted relics,  
But creeping back to their adulteries,  
To cry their shame on me,  
Who sinned not in mine own right !  
There sinned another for me, and the blush is  
mine !

*Gawaine.*

Forget thy wrongs !

*Mordred.*

Yea . . . when the sea is stilled !  
When the wind is laid to rest for ever !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

When memory forgets herself !  
Yea . . . I will forget !

*Gawaine.*

Remember thine own passions, and forgive !

*Mordred.*

Yea . . . I will forgive . . .  
When hate becometh kind !  
When winter is warm . . .  
When my blood is cold !  
But . . . need I strike ?  
Fate will a wonder weave,  
A wonder big with Doom.  
Arthur shall see with his own eyes,  
The lips that kissed the maiden  
Shall curse the harlot he hath taken to his heart !  
Then burning anguish shall shrive his soul,  
And Mordred's hands be clean of blood !

*Death, Doom, and fading leaves of Autumn,  
Fate and the web that's woven . . .*

## ACT II

### PRELUDE

*A serpent's eyes are bright,  
A supple body fair,  
The wiles of the ways of night,  
The words of the true and fair . . .  
Evil and good to-day  
And the warp and woof of life . . .  
One by one the stars go out,  
Amid the gloom to gulf the King . . .  
Death and black destruction,  
And the web that's woven  
On the loom of Fate . . .  
The chamber of Morgan le Fay  
Is heavy with strange perfume . . .  
In the midst a loom, whereon she's wont to weave.  
The room is fairly hung  
With curtains of darkest blue,  
For this is her chosen hue . . .  
Peace . . .  
Let there be stillness !  
Let silence brood . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*For dull foreboding around us broodeth.  
On the couch of Morgan le Fay  
Is Guenever the Queen.  
Her forehead on her hand is held.  
Sadly she rests, as one who waits the hand of fate.  
Then breaketh into sound  
The pent up feeling of her heart.*

*Guenever.*

The hour is passed . . .  
He comes not . . .  
I am delivered from the doom . . .  
From love . . . and . . . Launcelot . . .  
Again may I greet Arthur with brow un-  
clouded . . .  
And know the quiet of a heart . . .  
Where wakes no passion . . .  
But Launcelot is untrue !  
He swore he loved me,  
And he comes not . . .  
I, the Queen, true to the tryst,  
And he, a Knight, servant of Arthur,  
Too proud to share my shame !  
Come, if thou hast honour, Launcelot !  
Where'er thou art my urging soul now seeks  
thee !  
But come . . . to lead me to the King !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Sadly she rests as one who waits the hand of Fate.  
Slowly parts the curtain of the chamber,  
And Launcelot cometh.*

*Launcelot.*

Thou here, O Guenever !  
I almost feared to find thee.

*Guenever.*

Thou, Launcelot, feared to find me !

*Launcelot.*

Yet when I see thee, all my fear is fled.

*The flaming heart of Launcelot*

*Beateth anew with love.*

*A moment was he fearful,*

*But the mood was soon afar.*

But thou, who yestere'en denied me,

Why com'st thou at this second setting of the  
sun ?

*Guenever.*

Yesternight, at this very hour,

Came I upon the King.

The Hall was empty.

He chode me that I failed to meet the Knights  
returning.

*Launcelot.*

Was he then fearful, as a jealous husband ?

*Guenever.*

He spake as King,  
As though for me he cared not.  
Thou, Launcelot, doth long for love.  
He holdeth me, and cares not . . .

*Launcelot.*

I love thee, Guenever.  
All for thee freely I cast away.  
I loved thee when first I saw thee,  
On the nuptial night of song!  
Thou wert made for me!  
I was made for thee!  
Thy half-thought waits for mine,  
And if I doubt thou turnest dusk to daylight.

*Then almost solemnly his arms fold round her,  
And Guenever to Launcelot clings.*

As I fold my arm around thee,  
Dost thou not feel  
We are but one in form?  
There's no Launcelot,  
There's no Guenever!  
Till in each other's arms we rest,  
When are we both what we were born to be!

*Guenever.*

It may be, Launcelot . . .



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

But thine arms are . . .

As were Arthur's . . . in our springtide . . .

*Swiftly their hearts fly backward*

*To the nuptial night of song !*

*To the Hall of Arthur's welcome,*

*And Uther's ancient wine.*

Aye, in this Camelot,

On the bridal day,

He was as thou art now !

*Launcelot.*

But thou dost love me ?

*Guenever.*

As my life, my Launcelot !

*Less fiercely strain their arms,*

*And Guenever draws back from his embrace.*

*Launcelot somewhat sad now looketh,*

*That now there is no outgo for his passion*

*Save the forswearing of King Arthur's service.*

*Love however golden hath its load . . .*

*Apart from the Queen he draws.*

*Launcelot.*

I have counted the price !

Fame and honour flown . . .

'The curse of the world, yelping of curs !

The doubt of mine own heart . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

But I am strong enough to right thee !  
I will make thee Queen of a realm afar.  
A kingdom will I carve, as men a forest clear !  
Thou shalt be Lady of Lands Unknown.  
The Isle of Britain is not all the world !  
Now when most I love thee,  
More will I do for thee,  
That man in his strength,  
'Neath the agelong sun,  
Has done in the world before !!

*In Britain or Bretagne stands  
Launcelot the noblest Knight.  
In further and loner lands  
Sir Launcelot's sword shone bright.  
Many the weak who've suffered wrong  
Have found the sword of Launcelot strong,  
With Guenever beside him  
He feareth not the world.*

*Guenever.*

It cannot be.

*Launcelot.*

Then might shall make it !

*Guenever.*

Our ways are far apart,  
Our hopes are faded.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Thou hast a hearthfire,  
And I am wedded to a kingdom . . .

*Launcelot.*

The fire of my hearth is clean gone out,  
'Tis cold as she who sits beside it.  
The Kingdom . . .  
Did Tristan think of Cornwall's King?

*Guenever.*

Belike he did . . . Tristan . . . Isolda !  
Their love was deeper, broader, higher  
Than the world wherein we wander.  
Happy were they in Death,  
Happy to rise in love and splendour  
In worlds we know not now !  
We love as man and woman, Launcelot !  
Well know we what we do . . .

*Launcelot.*

I would not yield an hour of this earth,  
While thou and Love had life !  
When most I love thee  
Do I bid thee fellow !

*Very calm is Guenever.*

*With pent-up passion she struggles hard,  
Holding her arms as one who offers up  
Some precious jewel of the soul.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Guenever.*

And now, when most I love thee,  
Do I bid thee from me go !

*Launcelot.*

Where shall I go ?  
Without thee Heaven were void,  
And Hell could add no pang nor woe.

*Geuener.*

No longer Arthur's wife, nor love of Launcelot,  
Shall I seek another Court and King . . .

*In a far land a Castle lies,  
Where dwell the Knights of the Holy Grail.*

*Launcelot.*

No land is like to ours !  
No King than Arthur can we serve !

*In a far land a Castle lies  
Where rules the King of the Holy Grail.  
Not his the Kingdom of the world,  
Where all the garish glitter hold us :  
But his the Halls of Adoration  
Where earthly desire itself outsoareth.*

*Guenever.*

He whom the Grail King serves,  
In high Montsalvat's holy glades,  
Whose Crown was of thorns,

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Whose Cup was bitter.

Yea, I will seek a convent.

And, Launcelot, follow once again the Quest !

Thus Galahad found peace, and for our souls  
doth pray.

*They pray for a world of wanderers,  
For man and his warring tribes.*

*But the clash of arms he heareth,  
He sees the tourney's field.  
And Launcelot's heart high beateth  
With the thought of Guenever.*

*Launcelot.*

No more that gleam shall draw me,  
Thy face would ever shine before me,  
And all my prayers to Guenever would rise.  
Nay ! an earthly monk I'll be,  
My monastery the world,  
And every human wrong a bead upon my  
rosary.

*Full of beauty is Sir Launcelot,  
With his heart and face of flame.  
Full of longing is the lady . . .*

*Guenever.*

One kiss, O Launcelot . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Launcelot.*

If I never touch, nor see thee more,  
Well can I keep my word!

*Hard grows his face,  
With the pain of striving,  
His senses gainst his soul.*

*Guenever.*

Hold thou my hands.

*Launcelot.*

It were but agony, O Queen.

I will to Joyous Gard . . . my sorrowful  
home . . .

. . . where I will dwell . . . when I no longer  
wander.

*Guenever.*

I hear a sound . . .

. . . a footstep . . . Launcelot . . .

*Without a word the curtain's drawn aside,  
And Morgan, full of mockery, stands there.*

*Morgan.*

Thou, Guenever!

Thou who didst banish Guyomar,  
Made desert my delight!

With Launcelot, too! Ha! Ha! i'faith!

*She laughs again, and comes into the chamber,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*With her Mordred, Gawaine, and some few  
squires.*

*Mordred turneth toward Gawaine,  
Who gazes sadly at the glorious pair.*

*Mordred.*

Gawaine, did I not tell thee ?

*Gawaine thinketh not the Queen is guilty,  
Yet scarce can gather why she meets with Laun-  
celot.*

*Also, he thinketh of the forest, and Nacien's hut,  
And Launcelot's sunset prayer toward Lyonesse.*

*Gawaine.*

Launcelot, I trust thee yet !  
Say what other cause doth bring thee here !

*Morgan le Fay tosses her head.*

*Morgan.*

When my love was by me lain  
In this my chamber,  
Did I plead some other cause ?

*Gawaine.*

Nay, Morgan, but we know thee.  
Thirsty of pleasure and the world's wine . . .  
But, Guenever, the Queen . . .

*Mordred.*

Say, Launcelot, what brings thee here ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*With malice speaketh Mordred.  
Sir Launcelot's gaze is stern,  
His voice as strong as ever.*

*Launcelot.*

Ask thou my sword!

*Morgan.*

To the King, Mordred!

*Mordred turns to go,  
But in the doorway stands King Arthur.  
He seeth Launcelot and the Queen apart,  
Yet at a glance he knoweth how it is with them.  
Near the door are grouped those who have found  
    them thus,  
At fall of night.  
No word he speaks, but to his full height draws  
    himself,  
Proud at this moment of betrayal.  
No anger shows he, but looks at Launcelot,  
And at his wife, who is no more for him.  
Proud is Sir Launcelot's look,  
But very sad, for he doth feel  
No way can lead them forth.  
The others watch the King,  
Morgan fearful lest her plot be known,  
Her eyes upon Gawaine  
Lest haply he hath come upon her guilt.*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*But she hath woven well  
Her web of lust and lies . . .  
Arthur turns upon his heel and swiftly goes.  
The Queen and Launcelot with quiet step do  
follow,  
He holding back the curtain as they pass.  
So go they forth save Morgan and Sir Mordred . . .  
Ah ! would the King of all the truth were ware !  
E'en Morgan scarce can ken the Queen  
In the wild arms of Love,  
As she with Guyomar.*

*Morgan.*

Mordred, didst thou mark him ?

*Mordred.*

How fierce his mood,  
How like a sword his silence !

*Morgan.*

No longer ours the plan !  
Throw down the reins,  
That Fate may run the course !

*Mordred.*

Fate's horses know the road,  
That leads to the deliverance !

*Morgan.*

To Death and to destruction !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Fear and foreboding do we feel for Arthur . . .  
From his own loins hath he begot destruction.*

*Mordred.*

Nay! on the ruins of Arthur's rule,  
Will we raise up Freedom!

*Morgan.*

Do what thou wilt!  
My work is done.  
See here!

*What has her needle wrought  
With the web of green and gold,  
And the many coloured thread?  
A tree that hight the Tree of Life,  
And under it a man and woman :—  
Launcelot and Guenever.  
Their heads are turned away as though to kiss.  
And though the arms of Launcelot are round her,  
Fear and not Love . . . Doubt and not Joy are  
broidered.  
Nor far away is Arthur with a heavy crown upon  
his head,  
And a great arrow bedded in his heart . . .  
She has wondrous craft with the web,  
And her needles are sharp and keen*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*As the arrow that woundeth Arthur.  
She has broidered sorrow for Launcelot,  
And a lover for the Queen.*

See Launcelot and Guenever as lovers !  
And Arthur with an arrow in his heart !

*Mordred.*

But thou dost hate the Queen !  
Wove you Launcelot as her lover ?

*Morgan.*

A guilty love for Launcelot !  
And shame for Guenever I broidered !  
What were a joy to me and Guyomar,  
To them were death !  
Know, Mordred, that in my busy bosom  
Yet there was room for Launcelot.  
Thus hath he chosen Guenever !

*Mordred.*

Hast thou no shame ?

*Morgan.*

Shame is thy heritage, Sir Mordred !

*Mordred.*

O cruel comrade !  
Yet, thou art beautiful.

*A serpent's eyes are bright,  
A supple body fair,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The wiles of the ways of night,  
The panther within the lair . . .*

*Morgan.*

Ponder no longer !

*Mordred.*

What wilt thou do ?

*Morgan.*

For my part all is done.  
Methinketh, Mordred,  
Thou hadst some anger toward thy sire,  
Touching the Kingdom . . .

*Mordred.*

Be not so scornful.  
The thing hath come so swift  
We are not ready.

*Morgan.*

We are not ready, pshaw !  
Read thou this tablet, boy !  
*She holds it in her hand . . .*  
*He takes the tablet up,*  
*And reads the words set there.*

*Mordred.*

All these for me will fight ?

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Morgan.*

Aye! add thou Launcelot!  
Soon will we stir him up,  
With the name of Guenever.  
Then, before the sorrowful King  
Has found another Queen,  
We will plunge the world in war,  
And thy Kingdom weld, I ween!

## ACT III

### PRELUDE

*O'er Arthur's Court the Reaper stands,  
And his sickle shall cut in sorrow . . .  
Darkness . . . Doom . . . and Death,  
And the web that's woven.  
With foreboding we feel the gloom of a storm that  
is growing,  
And seem to see King Arthur beneath the load of  
his pain.  
Like the breathing of steeds is the sound of the  
wind that is blowing,  
And like to the running of horses uncurbed by  
the rein.  
Gather, ye storm clouds, and loom ever larger,  
Break over Britain, and come down, ye rains.  
In far distant days shall grow the glad harvest !  
For struggle giveth strength, and passion breedeth  
power !  
Break, waves of Fate, on the shores of old Time . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Oft strewed with the wreckage of many a valiaunt  
vessel . . .*

*Yet will Man seek the All-good o'er seas, and in  
many a clime,*

*While sires beget sons with Time and the Hour to  
wrestle.*

*Live all fulfilment, all Life and all Power !*

*Even in Death shall the dead rise in glory !*

*Ye who are doomed and die before your Triumph's  
great hour,*

*Shall rise in the Dawn of To-morrow, living in  
legend and story.*

*Arthur, in Death shalt thou live, our manhood's  
best man,*

*Till Britain be blest on the Earth as men hope for  
in Heaven,*

*Till Day spring from dark, and the night of the  
nations we span,*

*With Memory's breath and the lives of our great  
ones for leaven !*

*But the world is great with Doom,*

*And disaster stirs in the womb . . .*

*Darkness, Doom and Death,*

*And the web that is woven of evil.*

*Come Doom, and black disaster, bury Arthur !*

*Come, worm of Death, feed thou upon the oak of  
the Round Table !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Burn, glorious fuel, by greed and vengeance  
kindled,  
From your embers shall spring the fires of the  
future !*

*The vale of Camalan before us . . .  
The blackest night o'er Camalan is cast . . .  
The veil of darkness o'er the stars is drawn.  
Down slopes the ground toward the river,  
Running in the hollow,  
And rises over gorse-grown slopes to the farther  
side.  
There is Mordred's camp, where flare the watch  
fires,  
On the horizon do they seem to flame.  
We hear the water of the river,  
The ripple of the wavelets as it rushes . . .  
O'er the valley come the shouts of warriors,  
But here, near Arthur's camp, is silence.  
Then come two figures slowly . . .  
With weapons and war-gear upon them . . .  
Bedivere and Arthur come.  
The King is sad of meanour,  
And in the dark is very downcast.  
O god of war, where is thy beauty ?  
Red are thy banners, and blood thy drink.  
And when men slay their kindred,*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Most art thou accurst !*

*The men of Mordred o'er the valley shout,*

*And growl and roar like beasts of prey by night !*

*Arthur,*

Aye, Bedivere ! There flare the watch fires.

*Bedivere.*

Alas ! for the boy's wild blood !

*Arthur.*

Thus for my sin doth Britain suffer.

Yea ! I have lit yon fires, not Mordred.

*In Merlin's sooth,*

*From his own loins hath he begot destruction.*

*Bedivere.*

But sleep, O King ! The dawn shall quench  
yon fires,

And thy spirit the usurper slay !

*Arthur.*

I will not sleep, O Bedivere,

For in last Thursday's battle was slain Gawaine !

Him next to Launcelot and to thee I reckoned.

My wife was false, but he met death for me !

Aye, sleep is banished from my brows,

And only Death shall close mine eyes.

Leave me, O Bedivere, here will I watch.

Be near me in to-morrow's battle !

Be near . . . Be near . . . O Bedivere !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Slowly Bedivere wends away,  
Leaving the King alone . . .  
Slowly Arthur paces up and down . . .  
Slowly up and down he paces . . .  
To and fro, like a beast both tired and restless . . .  
Bowed is his head as he walks . . .  
At length he stops . . .  
Upon a gorse-crowned mound his gaze is set . . .  
For half a moment he seems to see . . . in spirit  
form . . . Gawaine.  
As quickly is it gone.*

*Arthur.*

Art thou Gawaine,  
Or the sick image on my brain?  
No sound . . . no word . . .

*Arthur.*

I see thee still!  
With all my soul I cry to thee,  
That, with the burning longing of thy spirit,  
Thou wilt force the veil of silence,  
And speak of hope or warning.

*Naught is to be seen . . .  
But on the air a sound is borne . . . "Fight not  
to-morrow."  
Heavy the air and the stirring sound of wind  
arising . . .*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Like the breathing of horses the sound of the wind.  
Across the valley flare the watch fires,  
Leaping 'neath the breeze.*

*Arthur.*

There flare the warlike fires.  
Hear'st thou not the horses of battle ?  
*Though naught is seen he hears a voice.*

*Arthur.*

I would not die, Gawaine,  
Since Death would strike the work I do.  
I would pluck the weeds from the world's  
garden  
Before I pass that portal.  
Had I power to weave the future,  
Or build a kingdom as men rear castles,  
The world in peace should dwell.  
And men no longer fight for fame,  
But in golden days of love and labour  
Should live their natural span.  
Gawaine, if to thee I come,  
Should to-morrow's battle bring me to thee,  
Thinkest thou the world will strive  
To bring to birth the dreams of Arthur ?

*No voice . . .*

*No sound but the soughing of wind,*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*And the fretting of the storm that would break . . .*

*Arthur.*

I would they should hold the faith !  
And if, when I am dead,  
Liveth my soul that still I think and feel,  
I will pray that the Lord of Life  
His blessing pour upon His earthly vassals.  
Upon the eyes that they see the beauty of the  
world,  
And the wonder of all that liveth !  
Upon the ears that they hear the pleading cry  
of those that suffer ?  
Upon the souls of men and women  
That where they wed they love !

*All goes dark and drear with the gloom of a storm  
that is brewing.*

*The moan of the winds is sad as the King and his  
woe.*

*Arthur.*

I look for the children of the future,  
The harvest of Faith and Love !  
Of the loins of the strong and the free,  
From the womb of women who rejoice !  
Thus as I turn to Death, all hail to Life and  
Love !!!

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Now we see the true King Arthur,  
Free among the storm winds on the downs,  
Like to a god with worlds fresh brought to birth,  
Kindling Life from chaos.*

By all that I have lost, thus pleads my soul . . .  
By the sin that brought me Mordred,  
By the lack of love that lost me Guenever,  
And the failing faith that bade me fear  
To lead a Quest victorious  
To the Castle of the Holy Grail.

*All gets black and dim with the gloom of a storm  
that is growing.*

*No more we see King Arthur beneath the load of  
his pain.*

*Like the breathing of steeds is the sound of the wind  
that is blowing,*

*And like to the running of horses uncurbed by the  
rein.*

*Out of the darkness hear we his voice as he wendeth  
away . . .*

*Arthur.*

Even as this storm upcometh  
My heart is overcome with sadness,  
O Guenever, my wife, whom I so trusted  
That I set no guard . . .

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Horses of Fate, so swift as ye speed through the  
gloom and the blackness :*

*The dark of a night without stars and heavy with  
thunderous gloom !*

*So brood the powers of darkness, when Fate's  
womb is grown big with disaster.*

*All goes black and dim,*

*The crash of the heavy thunder,*

*The droop of the clouds so grim,*

*Black and dull and drear as the gloom of thunder  
gathers*

*Between the flashes of lightning that cleave the  
clamouring sky.*

*Keen are the blades of the swords of the storm god,  
Which fire the cloven sky.*

*Now the chaos and gloom reveal . . .*

*A darkling form amid the dimness.*

*A wraith rising from the driving clouds,*

*As a sea-god from out the waves.*

*Merlin.*

*I am the wraith of the world's wisdom !*

*Quit of my earthly corse, amid the shades*

*It is my doom to dwell.*

*Woe to this world of Arthur and the Table,*

*For in battle shall the brute be foremost,*

*But the doom shall be so full of sorrow*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

That the wail of the mourners down the years  
shall echo,  
Till, born of the glory of that faded day,  
Shall spring to light the Dawn !

*Heavy the boom of the thunder,  
Breaking dull in the distance . . .  
Solemn the wraith of Merlin 'mid the cloud  
wrack.*

*Merlin.*

There are two gates to the world's garden,  
The one is Birth, the other Death is hight.  
All that from storm and travail springs  
In restless stream shall flow,  
And in the ebb shall pass in storm and sighs.  
Half standeth Britain in bestial night,  
Half looketh toward the Dawn !

*Like the breathing of steeds the sound of the wind  
that is blowing,  
And like to the neighing of horses uncurbed by  
the rein . . .*

*Merlin.*

Howl ! Howl, ye storm winds !  
Ride ! . . . Ride ! hunters and hounds of the air !  
Horses of Fate, so swiftly ye speed through  
the gloom and the cloud wrack !

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The dark of a night without stars and heavy with  
thunderous gloom . . .*

*Over drear Camalan's field*

*Where Merlin's wraith so sorely broodeth . . .*

*Merlin.*

The day of death shall come,  
So full of sorrow that its doom,  
As long as our isle shall lie  
Amid the surging seas,  
Shall live by British hearth fires!  
In our deeds and in our dreams,  
Shall Arthur's fire be kindled.

The justice of the Table Round shall live  
As long as oak trees have their root in Britain.  
In the wonder of children, and the first hopes  
of young men,  
Shall Arthur live again!

*Then breaks the storm in all its fullness !  
The wraith form of Merlin vanished . . . and  
darkness master.*

*The howling of winds, the yelping of war dogs is  
heard.*

*The spirits of evil are come 'mid the storm winds !  
The laughter of demons is heard over Camalan's  
field !*

*Swirling, snorting, belching from the blackness . . .  
Fires and lightning from the noisy blackness,*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The cauldron of chaos 'mid smoke and 'mong  
flame !*

*Then all grows slowly clear and calm, but dark . . .*

*Out from the turmoil and tumble of cloud drift*

*We see the glare of Mordred's watch fires,*

*The other side the field of Camalan.*

*Around them the rebels who follow his flag.*

*And set on a hillock where all men may see him,*

*Mordred, the bastard, and leader of men !*

*Mordred the faithless who knoweth not Mercy !*

*Friend of the flesh and foe of the soul !*

*Around are the rebels, who 'mid smoke and flame,*

*Wait for his word.*

*Mordred.*

*Men ! I pray you, hearken !*

*Aye ! Aye ! is the roar of their voices !*

*Mordred.*

*Soon shall come the dawn*

*Of Arthur's doom,*

*And Britain's deliverance !*

*No more shall gleam the sickly Grail Light.*

*Let all our faith in what is gone be all forgotten.*

*As men and women let us live,*

*No God, no King, no Grail !*

*Men.*

*Aye ! Aye ! No King ! No Grail !*

*Mordred will set us free !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Loud is the wind,  
And wild the shouts of the men.  
Hard flare the watch fires !*

*Mordred.*

Gold shall strengthen your hands,  
Not crown the heads of Kings !  
Ye shall delve in the bowels of the earth.  
From the dark ye shall bring forth metals !  
To the ends of the earth ye shall go,  
And bring us precious stones.  
In your thousands ye shall dwell in cities !  
Ye shall all have wealth,  
And the world in peace shall live !

*Men.*

Long live Mordred !  
Down with the King at Dawn !

*From across the valley comes no shout . . .  
All there is peace . . .  
Yet when the morning breaks  
Will there be battle.  
A lull in Mordred's camp . . .  
No more he speaks,  
But proudly gazes on his army,  
His face aflame and lit by firelight !  
A voice is raised on high.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Man.*

Shall all men then have wealth ?  
Shall no man drive the herd ?

*Men.*

Down with the traitor !  
Slay ! Slay !

*Fierce are the cries,  
And the man is beaten to earth.  
Naught saith Mordred . . . the man of peace . . .*

*Mordred.*

And when your land is full of folk,  
Ye shall sail across the seas,  
And the dark-skinned men shall slay !

*Another voice is raised.*

*Man.*

Are these the days of peace ?  
We would rather Arthur's ways !

*Men.*

Slay him ! Slay the traitor ! Slay !

*Then is there fighting and turmoil,  
The swaying to and fro of the crowd in the firelight.  
Mordred on the hillock stands,  
Surrounded by dark forms of Knights,  
Rebels from Arthur's Court.  
We ken them not for the storm winds blow.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*The smoke of the fires goes here and there,  
And the moving crowd sways to and fro.  
At length the brawl hath end . . .*

*Mordred.*

This is the great new law,  
That usurps the power on high :—  
They who are strong shall live !  
Those that are weak may die !  
Among the beasts 'tis held.  
It holds of plants and trees !  
And Man, the world's great flower,  
In all is like to these !  
Ye shall own the wide wide world,  
If ye put your trust in me !  
And a thousand years from now  
Shall Britain be as heaven !

*Loud is the laughter from the clamouring skies,  
The howling of winds and the war dogs of hell . . .  
The laughter of demons is heard over Camalan's  
field.*

*Mordred.*

My men, we strike at dawn.  
By night he shall be dead !  
*Woe ! Woe ! ye wailing winds . . .  
The loom of Fate  
The web hath woven !*

# THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

## EPILOGUE

SCENE :—A Ruined Chapel near the Water

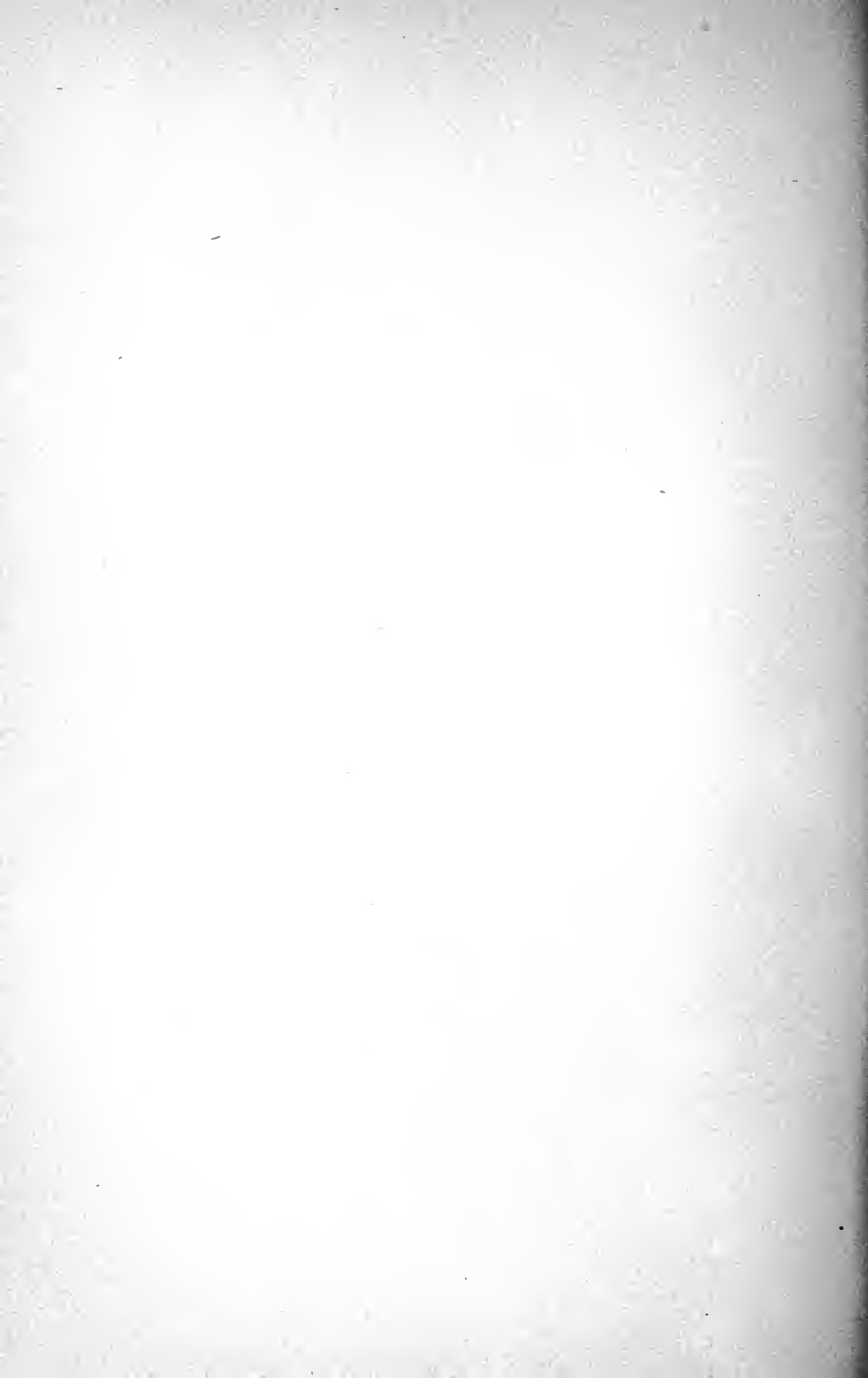
### Characters

KING ARTHUR

SIR BEDIVERE

THE LADY OF THE LAKE

MEN-AT-ARMS



## PRELUDE

*The day of death has come,  
So full of sorrow that its beautiful doom  
Shall be known to the men of Britain  
So long as our isle shall rest  
Amid the surging seas.  
Shall Arthur come again ?  
Shall he appear once more in Britain ?  
Aye ! in our dreams and in our deeds  
The fire of Arthur shall be kindled.  
The justice of the Table Round shall rule  
So long as oak hath root in Britain !*

. . . . .

*An Autumn sunset falling slowly,  
With ruby ray the colour of sorrow,  
Tinges the trees and falls across the water,  
An inlet of the sea . . . but as a lake 'tis still.  
The winds are laid to rest these even,  
And the hands of passion folded . . .  
Amid the trees, anigh the water,  
A ruined chapel stands.*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*By it Bedivere and some few men-at-arms  
Bending o'er King Arthur, as he lies there wounded.  
The air is still this evening in September,  
The breezes furled like banners after battle.  
Peace after storm, and cooling airs of eventide,  
Beside the ruined Chapel, where the warriors  
watch o'er their King.  
And afar is the sound of the sea,  
The sorrow of waves that waune, where lies the sea,  
And soft the lapping of the wavelets on the lake  
shore.*

*Arthur.*

And now the end has come, O warriors.  
Down droops the sun . . .  
At sunset must I die . . . in Merlin's sooth.  
*At sunset should he die, and afterward must come  
A breed of lesser men.*  
O drooping sun, again thou riseth . . . while  
no more I rise.

*Bedivere.*

Aye, King, thou wilt as surely rise!  
For long ago the word to Merlin came,  
That once again in Britain should'st thou rule!  
*Again shall Britain's glory rise,  
And once again the Grail on earth shall come.*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Arthur.*

O Bedivere, then was I strong,  
And well might rise  
Above the waters of the deep, dark river . . .  
But now I swoon, and know not what I say . . .

*He swoons . . . and before his eyes . . . the  
swimming water swirlleth*

*And down . . . down . . . he reels . . . sick-  
ens and sinketh . . .*

*He hears the fierce buzz of a music, distant and  
dull . . .*

*Bedivere raises him with tender care.*

*A warrior fetches water.*

*No more his senses sicken, and the men he sees  
again.*

*Arthur.*

All ye who stand around me, go I pray!  
Take leave of Arthur as a traveller outsetting.  
For far I go where all ye cannot fare!

*Men-at-arms.*

God speed, O King,  
And, in to-morrow's battle,  
Some shall come to thee!

*Arthur.*

To-morrow shall no battle be.  
Both he who made it and his sire are . . . slain.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*He who sowed the sweet poison,  
And the beautiful harvest grown,  
Bow down to the sickle of death . . .  
Sadly the men go forth,  
Turning their heads to see their King once more.  
For well they know the hand of Death is on him  
And only Bedivere is with him, as one by one from  
sight they pass . . .  
O sad and lowering sun,  
O'er the murmuring sea go down,  
While the wounded lord of Britain sleeps.  
Bedivere, his trusty watchman, will bear the  
burden with him.  
The wounds of the King more sore than the  
dreams of anguish ken . . .  
Fall, O Curtain of Night, on the scene of sunset  
sorrow . . .*

. . . . .

*Let now the silent stars watch o'er his pathway  
homeward !  
One by one the stars come forth,  
And calm moonlight floods the sleeping world,  
As when upon King Arthur's mother  
Tintagel's stars looked down.  
The storm and the surge of the sea on the rocks of  
Tintagel  
Silent are grown, and Arthur's heaving spirit*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*No longer struggles for his fellow men . . .*

*How calm the Night,*

*The moonlight beams how fair !*

*Can anguish slay on such a night as this ?*

*The sword so keen and sharpened,*

*Looks but for flesh to tear !*

*So fair the light !*

*On Arthur's face 'tis cast !*

*As when upon Igraine*

*The moonbeams shone . . .*

*No more the wavelets waune, on the way to  
Avalon.*

*Yet the sea is nigh in all his strength,*

*And the race of Arthur liveth still . . .*

*Upon the ruined chapel, overgrown with ivy,*

*Upon the rippling water of the inlet,*

*The moonbeams shine !*

*Bedivere upon some stones is set . . .*

*He has wrapped the King within his surcoat,*

*Lest the cool September night*

*Should chill the wounds.*

*Then Arthur, with the light upon him shining,*

*Turns to his faithful friend.*

*An earnest look upon his face . . .*

*He holdeth out the sword, Excalibur.*

*Arthur.*

*O take my Sword, and to the water fling it !*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

No more need I the help of sword or spear . . .  
For I who trusted in the blade,  
Cleave only to the Cross . . .  
All the points I wielded in the dust are lain.  
No succour have I save the Sacred Spear.

*Bedivere takes the sword . . .  
And moves some paces from the King.  
The eyes of Arthur close and back he leans  
Upon the bracken pillow made by Bedivere,  
Who layeth down the sword . . . and comes  
again . . .*

*Arthur.*

O Bedivere, thou wilt befool me,  
If the mist of Death close o'er mine eyes  
Before the sword return.  
Thou whose crest a silver chapel is . . .  
A silver chapel on an azure ground . . . is't  
not so ?  
Thou wilt rob me of my sword Excalibur.

*Bedivere.*

I would not rob thee, sire, of aught . . .  
Save thy sad wounds !  
But sorrow flood my soul that thy great sword,  
Which hath hewn freedom from the tyrant  
ranks,  
Shield of the helpless, should be cast

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Amid the weedy waters, there to rust !

*Arthur.*

Cast it, O Bedivere, upon the waters !  
By magic did it come, to mystery it belongeth.  
Thou art no Knight if thou refuse thy King  
The fealty his arm once forced . . .  
But now, no more . . . no more . . .

*Back goes Sir Bedivere,  
Full sick that Arthur doubts his fealty.  
He takes the sword and swings it . . .  
Swirling across the Lake it goes . . . it goes . . .  
And with a splash beneath the surface sinks.  
Then with brow unclouded comes Bedivere again.  
Strangely the King sets his gaze upon him,  
For the eyes of Bedivere are full of wonder,  
As of the faithful who have seen a vision.*

*Arthur.*

What wonder hast thou seen, O faithful friend,  
That all thy face is lit  
Amid the coming of the dark upon us ?

*Bedivere.*

I flung the sword with all the strength I  
might.  
Out, out upon the mere the blue light flashed !  
And the white glinting of the moon upon it  
Shone as a silver glory.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

From out the Lake there rose a hand,  
Which for a moment seemed to hold Excalibur,  
Then drew it down within the darkling mere.  
All the light seemed in an instant gone . . .  
But hearken, sire . . .

*Softly flows the tide adown the inlet,  
Where sadly waune the waves.  
But higher up the stream a sound . . .  
The breathless oars of ghostly rowers  
Break the surface calm.*

*Bedivere.*

The sound of oars is here . . .

*Nearer . . . still far away . . . the sound . . .*

*Arthur.*

Again is come the Queen  
From the violet isle of rest.  
Excalibur is gone and Arthur follows.  
The star of Arthur shines no more.

*Bedivere.*

Goest thou to the sunset land, O King !

*Arthur.*

Nay, I go further.  
My wounds are redder than the sorrowful sun . . .  
I go unto a vale where wounds are healed,  
And the air with flowers laden.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Bedivere.*

Goest thou to the Castle of the Grail ?

*The King gives forth no word.*

*He dreams of a violet isle,*

*Where the wind is laid to rest at even,*

*Where soft gales blow from the gate of the morn.*

*Arthur.*

Nay, Bedivere, but further . . .

Montsalvat is so pure and holy that the wounds  
of sinners heal not.

But where I go the sinful flesh grows clean.

*Bedivere.*

O Lord and King, when thou hast entered to  
thy kingdom

For sinners plead.

By the Cross which we could not bear !

By the Crown of Thorns immortal !

*Arthur.*

O Bedivere, 'tis not to highest heaven I wend,  
I who am slain by sin.

I go to heal me of my grievous wound

In a vale by mortals trod . . .

To the Vale of Avalon where soft gales

Blow from the gate of the morn,

Where white hands cool the brow, and the scents  
of flowers breathe.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*Then comes the barge, adown the streamway  
gliding . . .*

*Along the bank she comes and stays . . .*

*The boatmen hold her.*

*In the stern the Lady of the Lake is set . . .*

*Nowise older than when Arthur gat the sword.*

*And she is clad in purple,*

*As on the day so long ago.*

*The silver moonlight upon her shineth . . .*

*Upon the barge, the black-clad boatmen, and the  
ruined chapel.*

*With great compassion looks she on the King.*

*Lady of the Lake.*

Arthur, at thine hour of need I come

To take thee from a world of woe

To the violet isle of rest,

Where all thy wounds shall heal.

For thou hast cast away the Sword,

And thou the Holy Spear hast honoured,

Setting thy faith at last upon the Lord of Life.

Sir Bedivere, do thou bear him to the barge.

*Sir Bedivere with tender strength uplifts the King,*

*And, as he were a child, doth help him.*

*When to the selvedge they are come full slowly,*

*Two boatmen set King Arthur in the barge.*

*Upon a skin-clad couch, soft-cushioned, is he lain.*



## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

*No sign doth Arthur show, yet in the moonlight  
doth it seem*

*All earthly thought or passion hath been purged.  
Then Bedivere leans over . . . holds his hand . . .*

*A last time lifts it to his lips in fealty,*

*Then standeth back . . .*

*The boatmen move the barge away into the stream.*

*Lady of the Lake.*

*Peace to the soul of the King!*

*Again the breathless oars of the rowers break the  
surface,*

*The barge glides away . . .*

*Round the bend of the stream,*

*On the tide of the inlet,*

*She maketh for sea and the Isles.*

*Bedivere.*

*My King, to Heaven thou goest!*

*Westward thy sail is set.*

*Thy light shall burn in Britain,*

*A beacon to the Britons of to-morrow!*

*They set the sail!*

*Godspeed o'er the Western water!*

*Rise, O Lamp of Morning, o'er the Eastern  
hills!*

*Go through the moonlight to the violet isle of  
rest!*

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Rise odour of flowers, healing breath of the  
earth!

Thou hast led us to the kingdom of thy  
glory . . .

To the Cross, and the Holy Spear!

*Thy blood like His for men has flowed!*

*Go, Light of Britain, to the world's end go!*

*Woe, woe! Woe to our land!*

*Yet from the deeps the purest hope upsprings!*

*The message of the Grail is Hope . . .*

THE END

## NOTES

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(The following notes will make clear to the Press and Public that "Arthur of Britain" has not easily been born, and that a series of diverse criticisms have been passed upon it, from the fire of which it has emerged in its present form.—R.R.B.)

1904. The exact date of starting work upon this idea of a national drama that should contain a dream of Life is not known.

1905. Was at Tintagel, thinking of the Uther drama, in October of that year. First draft completed.

1906. Galahad's first Grail vision was written on April 23rd, 1906, being recorded in a memorandum book of that time. The scene remains almost unaltered.

First drafts (in which the form was more or less "operatic") were shown to Mr. Charles Manners, who said it was on too big a scale. He was then planning to produce Wagner's "Ring." He said it was no use seeking a composer, but advised that it should be sent to the publishers.

Revised and completed the work, and tried the publishers. One kept it over six months and wrote

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

a flattering letter. One offered to buy a copy if another publisher would issue it, and I hope that he will enjoy it now. A third advised me "not to shirk the labour of blank verse," imagining that the literary method was accidental. Another admired, and one begged alms.

It then went to Sir Edward Elgar, who had his own great Trilogy on hand. But since then his encouragement has been generous. And so was the attitude of Mr. Granville Bantock, who gave me a momentous interview, the story of which is told in "Music Drama of the Future."

1907. On Mr. Bantock's suggestion sent MS. to Mr. Rutland Boughton, who at once invited me to his house. On my arrival found that he had composed a first sketch of the Prelude to "The Birth of Arthur." It transpired that for about the same time he had been trying to write a libretto of his own on the same subject, and on similar lines.

Both of us hoped for a Festival Theatre for the production of our work, and both desired also to make it a national centre and not a close preserve.

The literary device of preludes and poetic commentary was mine. Mr. Boughton however evolved from my literary device the idea of Choral Drama, a term that now passes current to denote music-drama that differs from the "operatic method." He decided to combine the chorus and orchestra as in the oratorio of Elgar.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

1908. Prelude to Act II of Part I (orchestral version) played at a Leeds Symphony Concert, at the Town Hall, under the directorship of Mr. H. A. Fricker.

Second performance (December 31st) at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, with Mr. Dan Godfrey's Orchestra.

1910. Mr. William Reeves published "Music Drama of the Future."

1912. Closing Scene of Part I, Act II (orchestral arrangement) given under Mr. Thomas Beecham at Birmingham Philharmonic Concert.

"Merlin's Prophecy" sung by Rutland Boughton at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, Mr. Dan Godfrey conducting.

1913. The Vicar of Glastonbury and Dr. T. H. Davis, of Wells, offered very welcome co-operation, and the prospect of an open-air production of the first part at Glastonbury was mooted.

In August, experiments in "Human Staging" of Choral Drama were made at Gorselands, Southbourne. This was Rutland Boughton's idea of emancipating the chorus from their sitting posture among the orchestral players, to become part of the visible picture upon the stage, suggesting by their gestures the atmosphere and spirit of the music. At this juncture Miss Margaret Morris took her part in the rehearsals and obtained fine technical results.

## ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

---

Two successful choral dance performances of the Prelude and First Scene (Part I, Act II) took place at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth : Producers, Rutland Boughton and Margaret Morris ; Conductor, Mr. Edgar L. Bainton ; parts of Igraine and Brastias played by Mrs. Tobias Matthey and Mr. Arthur Jordan.

Rutland Boughton explained "Human Staging" (with illustrations) in the *World's Work* for November.

Glastonbury Arthurian Festival Committee appointed, including the Mayor and Town Clerk, with Mr. Roger Clark as Local Honorary Secretary, and Mr. W. J. Bowerbank, Wilts and Dorset Bank, Glastonbury, as Treasurer ; Miss A. M. Buckton, author of "Eager Heart," also co-operating.

1914. The Committee unanimously invited Sir Edward Elgar to lay the Foundation Stone of the Glastonbury Festival Theatre.

First Publication of the complete text.

## BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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SAINT FRANCIS : A TROUBADOUR OF THE SPIRIT. (David Nutt, 1s. net.) *Includes Poem and Essay, together with Dedicatory Sonnet.*

MUSIC DRAMA OF THE FUTURE. (William Reeves, 2s. net.) *Contains "Uther and Igraine" (original text of "The Birth of Arthur"), together with essays by the author and his collaborator, Rutland Boughton.*

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL. (G. Allen & Co., 3s. 6d. net.) *Chapters on the Nature of Drama and Shakespeare.*

### FOR CHORAL SOCIETIES

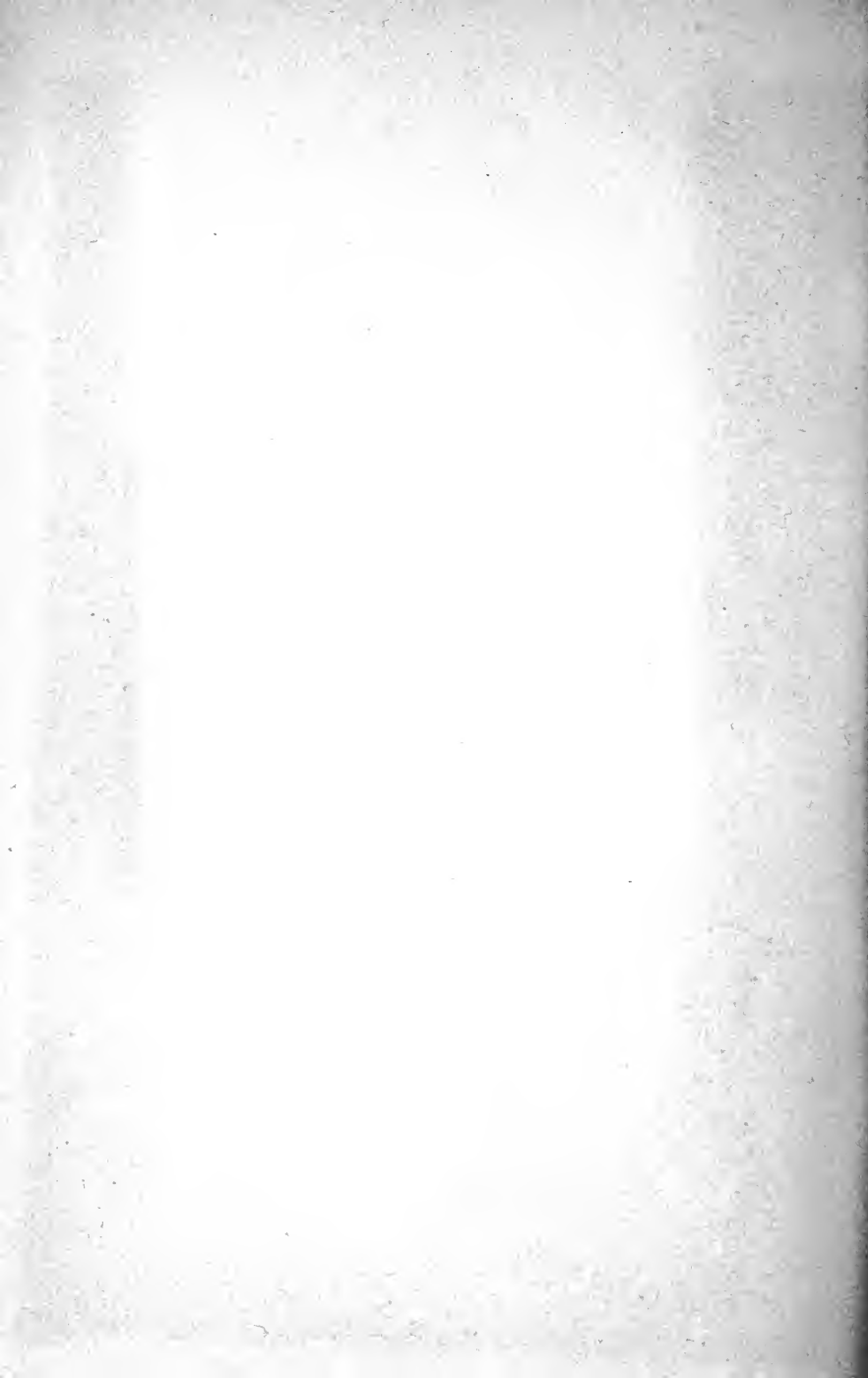
SUNSET AT SEA. A Poem for Chorus and Orchestra. Music by E. L. Bainton. (Stainer & Bell, 1s. 6d.)

A FEDERAL SONG. For unaccompanied Chorus (s.c.t.b.). Music by E. L. Bainton. (Curwen, 3d.)

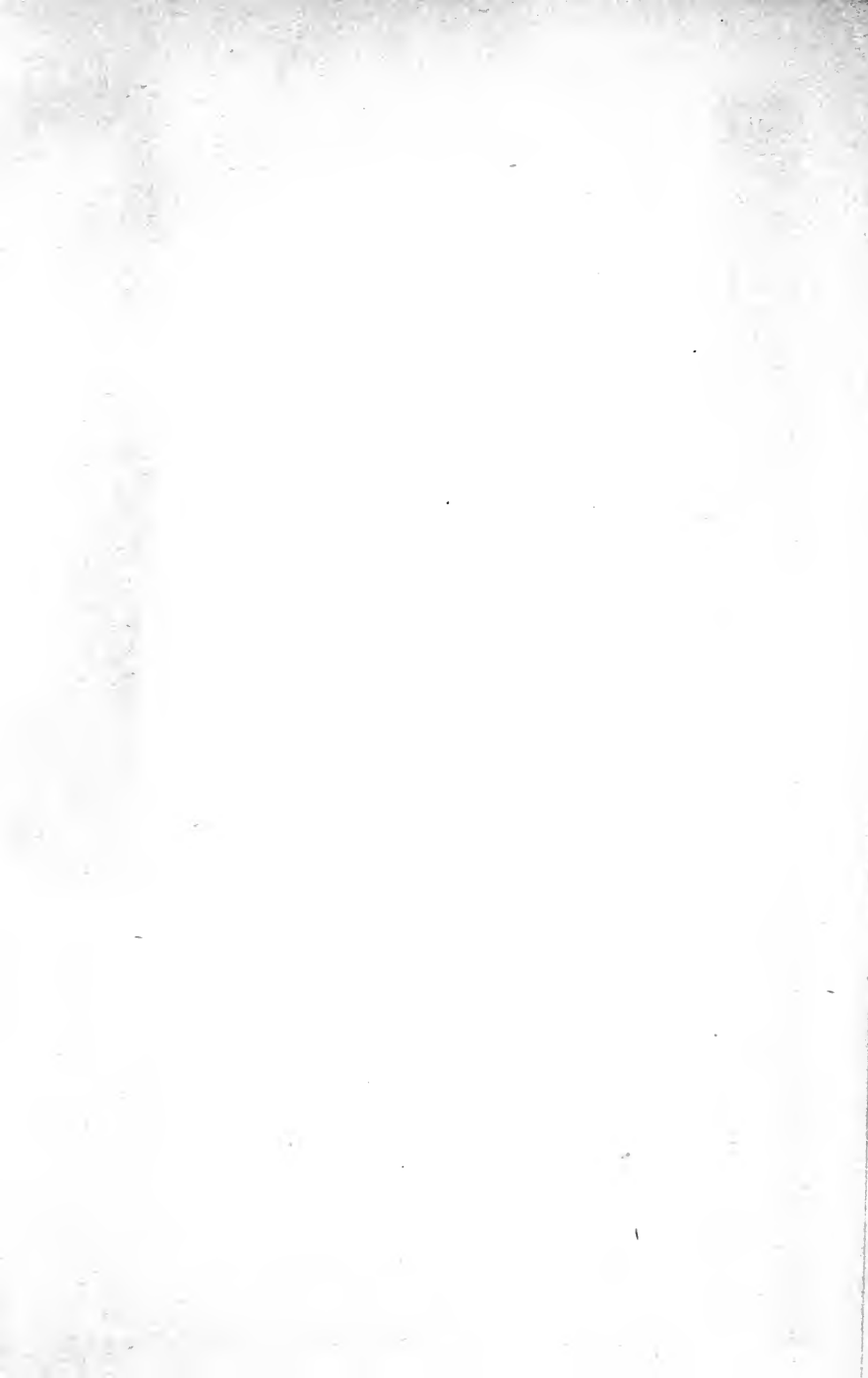
### FOR CHILDREN

WALOOKI THE BEAR. An Operetta. Music by E. L. Bainton. (Curwen, 1s.)

NOTE.—*A few copies remain of "The Lyre of Lectulus" (1902), an early volume of poems, mainly impressionistic. And the "Pall Mall Magazine" (September, 1913) published a poem of modern factory life, "The Sons of Tithonus," described by the "Morning Post" as an early example of Futurism, with a remarkable illustration by Emile Verpilleux.*







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